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## SEARCH AFTER SUNRISE

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HODGES)  
ON BECOMING A WRITER

# SEARCH AFTER SUNRISE

BY  
VERA BRITTAIN

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1951



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TO  
AGATHA HARRISON  
AND  
AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY  
IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR  
FRIENDSHIP

“ In the splendour of a new sunrise of wisdom  
let the blind gain their sight  
and let life come to the souls that are dead.

Touch them with thy right hand,  
make them one in spirit,  
bring harmony into their life,  
bring rhythm of beauty.

O Serene, O Free,  
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness  
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this  
earth.”

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

*The World Today is Wild*

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*Pakistan*, Pakistan Publications, Karachi ; *Poems from Iqbal*, translated by V. G. Kiernan, Kutub Publishers, Bombay ; Sir Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Civil and Military Gazette Ltd., Lahore, 1944 ; *The Flaming Earth*, Poems from Indonesia, Introduction and Translation by Ahmed Ali, Friends of the Indonesian Republic Society, Karachi, 1949 ; Ahmed Ali, *The Falcon and the Hunted Bird* (Anthology of Urdu Poetry), Kitab Publishers, Karachi, 1950.

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V.B.

July, 1951

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## I—FOREWORD

“What part of the world equals the splendour of our ideas? We dream in Asia a common dream, that of a comity of friendship. We dream that there shall be no death but a spirit of undefeatable hope. Nothing can die that deserves to live. Let us be soldiers of peace and missionaries of love, for by compassion and by love, not by hate, will the world be redeemed. We shall strive higher until we attain the stars and pluck the moon from the skies.”

Sarojini Naidu. Inaugural address to the Pan-Asiatic Conference, New Delhi, 23rd March, 1947.

THE IDEA WHICH runs through this book is that of a two-fold quest. It attempts to describe the search of India and Pakistan for a new future in their ancient land, but it also embodies the writer's seeking after fresh sources of hope and wisdom in a continent hitherto outside her experience.

In one sense the “sunrise” of Rabindranath Tagore's poem, quoted on page vi, has already dawned over India through his own work and that of Mohandas K. Gandhi. The philosopher-poet was the morning star of the Indian Revolution; the Mahatma became its leader and prophet. But India, as a re-born nation, seeks a new dawn by which all her dark places will be made plain. Her Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, sees its gleam on the horizon of his country's future; his speeches are infused with the vision which Edmund Spenser called “that Sabaoth's sight.” The word “after” in my title is therefore deliberately ambiguous, being used to suggest both its chronological meaning and its idea of a purpose.

There may well be readers, especially those with a long knowledge of India, who will regard this series of impressions as an essay in literary arrogance. One or two passengers on my homeward ship politely made me aware how presumptuous they thought me.

“And now I suppose you're going to write a book about it!” ironically remarked the Brigadier, coming home to retirement after years of service in the Indian Army, when mutual

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introductions at the Captain's table had made him aware of my identity. Pitying glances passed between him and an Indian Princess, going west to seek surroundings more congenial to her than those of a State compelled to "merge" with the Indian Union, when I confessed that I might succumb to the temptation.

The South African writer, Sarah Gertrude Millin, once discussed with me the fierce impact of first impressions.

"You can write about a country after twenty-four days," she said. "If you don't do it then, you must wait for twenty-four years."

She was so far right that a clearer picture of India and Pakistan possesses my mind to-day, after ten weeks' travel, than of the United States in which I have lived for long periods spread over a quarter of a century. But criticism of the author who "rushes into print" (something that no one can do under present publishing conditions, however strong the inclination of writer and publisher) arises, I believe, from a confusion in the critic's mind between information and interpretation.

In the task of interpretation as distinct from record, too much knowledge can be a handicap. It comes between the writer and his perception; it tempts him to set down a multitude of facts instead of endowing the few that he knows with imaginative significance. Those experts who disparage the literary traveller attempting to describe the impact of a new civilisation on his mind and spirit take for granted his right to interpret the history of his own country in biography or fiction. Yet it requires a greater imaginative effort to return in spirit to the England of John Bunyan, than to identify one's self for a short time with the changed outlook of modern India.

The traveller accustomed to make journeys through time and space will not only or even mainly collect facts. He knows that the facts which he can accumulate in a few weeks or months will not entitle him to pass verdicts or come to conclusions. The most he can claim is that his journey has been an experiment in understanding; and understanding is so rare a quality that even a little may be usefully passed on when once it has been gained.

A trained observer can acquire a new perspective after the briefest impressions, and henceforth see all his previous experience from an altered standpoint. The terrific impact of



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India upon the mind and senses of a Western European produces such a result. From the moment that he steps from ship or plane on to her dusty earth, he begins to realise how far her overwhelming needs outweigh even those of devastated European countries such as Holland and Germany after the Second World War.

Automatically he revises his estimate of the obligations, in terms of common humanity, which rest upon better endowed or more fortunate peoples. He perceives with a shock how excellent are those living standards which he has so often decried in recent years, and remembers that he has always compared them with life in the world's best fed and least populated countries—the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Switzerland, Sweden. A totally different picture emerges from the first glimpse of Asia's hungry millions.

Its effect is produced not only by the beggars who still haunt the streets of great cities, or by the ill-fed, half-clad vendors of miscellaneous wares on town pavements and station platforms. One glance at the workers who by their own limited standards have sufficient sustenance shows how fragile and light are their bones, and how meagre is the flesh under the smooth dark skin which shows the changing hues of health and sickness less clearly than the pale skins of Western peoples.

In a broadcast from New Delhi five months after the liberation of India, Mr. Nehru explained to wealthier listeners that there is no such thing as freedom for a man who is starving or a country which is poor. He used a second broadcast on the first anniversary of Independence to insist that the only war he desired to fight was "the war against poverty and all its unhappy brood." In an address to the United Nations Assembly at Paris in November, 1948, he reproached its members for their disproportionate attention to politics.

"It is a strange thing," he said, "when the world lacks so many things, food and other necessities in many parts of the world, that the attention of this Assembly of Nations is concentrated only on a number of political problems."

Its members, he suggested, might well take a holiday from politics and look at the places where food was lacking—a proposal with which Lord Boyd-Orr would agree. The inhabitants of such places cannot graduate into moral human beings; their

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primary needs are too great. Sporadic lawlessness still exists in India ; only those who see it in terms of her hunger and misery understand how limited it is.

Nothing less than a redistribution of the earth's resources by a world food and health organisation could raise life in the East from its present depths of poverty, dirt and sickness. The cries of self-pity which greeted responsible post-war appeals to " Save Europe Now " suggest that this technique of loving one's neighbour as one's self is still far from general acceptance. To the housewife buying her weekly rations at a suburban store, the pale rows of homeless refugees asleep on the midnight pavements of Calcutta are less than the dust in which they lie. Human salvation waits, as it has always waited, upon the slow growth of human imagination.

" To realise God," wrote Mahatma Gandhi, " is to see Him in all that lives, to realise our one-ness with all creation."

From the enlargement of mental consciousness comes a changed understanding of India's history and the meaning of her civilisation. The last two centuries of that history have seen frustration due to European supremacy in India and all through Asia. Their story reveals the deep stirrings which gradually broke through the tough crust of established tradition and created a great revolution. This revolution belongs to the events which have ended the epoch that began with the Renaissance and the Reformation ; the two world wars were part of its death-agony. But history knows no vacuum ; birth follows death ; the end of one era means the beginning of the next. Throughout the world, and not least in Asia, we see that new beginning.

India's history has been a tale of successive invasions, which began when the white-skinned Aryans crossed the mountain rampart that barred the sub-continent from northern Asia, and mingled with the darker people who already inhabited those southern regions. India survived that onslaught, just as she was to outlast the many others which followed.

Sometimes the aggressor remained to be assimilated. Defeated by the philosophic passivity on which his attack had made a dent no more permanent than the blow of a fist on a silken cushion, he learned to adopt the manners, ideas, gods and ritual of his victims. The East, in Matthew Arnold's words,

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“ bowed low before the blast,  
In patient deep disdain  
She let the legions thunder past  
And plunged in thought again.”

At other times the invader was eventually compelled to leave, as the last one left the other day, to the perturbation of those whose mental perspective is limited to a few generations. The Indians, as Tagore insisted in *Greater India*, could not draw the line of their history at Hindu, Mussulman, or Westerner. Peoples of different languages, customs and religions lived together for centuries, maintaining friendly relations not only amongst themselves, but owing to India's geographical position with the rest of Asia. Thus she became the meeting place for many nations, absorbing their cultures into her own rich life.

But she also offered, with her 400 million inhabitants, an unlimited recruiting-ground to the war-making West. Her suffering through Europe's wars, added to her key position in Asia, qualified India, in Tagore's opinion, to show mankind the road to peace. Though he did not live to see the day of liberation, his prophetic insight perceived the past stirring in the present, and realised that the often-repeated story was about to begin again.

“ I have felt your muffled steps in my blood  
Evermoving Past . . .  
Is not the restless Present itself a crowd  
of your own visions  
Flung up like a constellation from the  
abyss of dumb night ? ”

Jawaharlal Nehru has recalled Winwood Reade's description of history as a record of the martyrdom of man. “ It is also,” he continues, “ a record of repeated resurrections after every crucifixion. So you see this process of martyrdom and crucifixion of man, and resurrection following it, in interminable succession.”

Like all Asia, India is now entering upon a period of resurrection. In the light of that dawn she is looking back with Tagore to her function as the cradle of civilisation, the starting-place for man's long epic of failure preceding fulfilment and death swallowed up in victory. Throughout the Asiatic countries,

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the present struggle for freedom is reversing the process by which European control broke their ancient bonds and compelled them to look towards the West.

This control was strengthened by the Industrial Revolution, with its scientific inventions which affected Western Europe long before the rest of the world. Owing to the material advantages that those inventions gave to the nations responsible for them, India and her neighbours became involved in the power-politics and rival imperialisms of modern Europe. The well-to-do West has had leisure for these dubious political luxuries ; they are not natural to Asia, which needs all her energy for solving the problems of food, health, clothing, and shelter.

In a speech at Madras in June, 1948, Nehru explained that political change had to come before other changes to Asiatic countries, backward and static for generations after centuries of dynamic life. Without political change, the economic progress on which India depended for renewed vitality could not begin. The first symptoms of that political consciousness began as far back as 1905 with Japan's victory over Russia. In their life of Charles Freer Andrews, Marjorie Sykes and Benarsidas Chaturvedi quote a comment made by a lecturer at St. Stephen's College in Delhi where Andrews was then teaching : " Japan has proved to the world that the East is not a wilderness of dying nations."

A wave of national aspiration broke over India, bringing new hopes and ideals on its crest. *Swaraj*, or self-government, was first claimed in a Presidential address to the Indian National Congress in Calcutta by Dadabhai Naoroji in December, 1916. But India, her roots in the distant past with its long-established tradition of patience and non-violence, developed a technique of self-deliverance quite other than the aggressive methods of restless modern Japan.

In the teachings which C. F. Andrews gave at that time, he urged the Indians to return, as both Gandhi and Nehru later returned, to their own history and seek inspiration from it, rather than content themselves with devitalised imitations of European ideas. It was Andrews who made the first public claim by a non-Indian for India's independence in a letter to the *Indian Daily News* on 19th September, 1920.

" Having witnessed with my own eyes the humiliation of Indians," he wrote after the tragedy at Amritsar, " I can see no

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possible recovery of self-respect except by claiming an independence from British domination no less than that of Egypt."

So swift has been the historical impetus of the twentieth century, that only thirty years separated those first tentative utterances from the day of liberation, 15th August, 1947. After generations of inertia, it was hardly surprising that the speed of the Gandhian Revolution should have raised the Mahatma in the eyes of millions to the status of a god—one of the many incarnations, called Avatars, in which the devout Hindu believes. Among Western nations the prophecies of Christ, whose teaching they officially adopt as their religion, still await fulfilment, but Gandhi, embodying the half-conscious aspirations of the disregarded masses, seemed to realise the promise of a timely Saviour made by Sri Krishna, the hero of the *Bhagavad Gita* :

" When goodness grows weak,  
When evil increases,  
I make myself a body.

" In every age I come back  
To deliver the holy,  
To destroy the sin of the sinner,  
To establish righteousness."

The readjustment of relations between East and West has still to be made. Europe and America, which so long regarded Eastern cultures and practices as necessarily inferior, are now themselves being put to the test, but Tagore in his *Greater India* warned his fellow countrymen against a wholesale rejection of Western ideas. It was, he wrote, inevitable that two totally dissimilar peoples, " bound to be near each other and yet unable to be friends," should have found themselves in an intolerable human situation which by the rebellion of the one against the other had to be brought to an end. Yet such rebelliousness, it seemed to him, could only be a temporary phase.

While he regretted that the individual representative of British rule, whether magistrate, merchant, or policeman, did not usually present to Indians " the highest that his racial culture has attained," Tagore insisted that an India deprived of contact with the West " would have lacked an essential element for her attainment of perfection . . . The India to which the Englishman has come with his message is the India which is shooting up

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towards the future from within the bursting seed of the past. This new India belongs to humanity."

The day before India's liberation, Mr. Nehru addressed the Constituent Assembly in New Delhi on the meaning of that hour.

"A moment comes," he said, "which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance."

What will be the writing on that new page? What utterance will India, continuing the search for her place in the story of an apocalyptic era, contribute to the babel of voices which cry to us to support this project, pursue that purpose, accept some revolutionary panacea for the woes of the world?

To-day the conflict which dominates all others questions the value of the individual. Unless that problem is solved, said Nehru at Lucknow University, there will be no peace in any country. Is a man an economic cog in the impersonal machine of the modern State, or a spiritual being with a soul to be saved and the moral right to freedom? Can that freedom, understood by the West in terms of free will, have any meaning until men's bodies are liberated from want, and their minds from fear and insecurity?

India's answer to this question is foreshadowed in her Prime Minister's words. "The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over."

After her long period of quiescence, Asia has become important to the modern world, and India a force which no conscious citizen can afford to disregard. Once even the British politicians responsible for her welfare regarded her as a dreary problem; a debate on Indian affairs could be guaranteed to empty the House of Commons. The late Edward Thompson, in *Enlist India for Freedom*, quoted a statement by the Duke of Wellington in 1805—"The truth is that the public mind cannot be brought to attend to an Indian subject"—and added a comment made to him by a British Member of Parliament in the first May of

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the Second World War : " India ! *India* ? But what's wrong about India ? There's no reason to think about India ! "

To-day politicians will disregard this reborn Colossus at their peril. To be bored by the new India is a form of mental idiocy ; we have rather, in Norman Angell's phrase, " the moral obligation to be intelligent." Indifference is the less tolerable because India, according to Nehru, proposes to use her growing influence in the cause of world peace. She wishes only to ensure " that there is racial equality, and that people who are still subjugated should be free." Otherwise she will avoid entangling alliances, offer friendship to all countries whatever their ideologies, and " consider problems dispassionately and objectively in so far as we can judge them on their merits and not from that other point of view of a certain manœuvring for a possible future war."

When I was in India it still seemed uncertain that she would avoid war—not with some far-off assailant of world peace, but with her neighbour, Pakistan. To Europeans unfamiliar with the East, that deepening tension between two members of the Commonwealth seemed to herald nothing worse than a limited conflict, local though deplorable. But to some who were seeing world problems for the first time from an Asian standpoint, the Indo-Pakistan dispute represented the threatening source of a third major disaster.

Owing to the statesmanship of the two Prime Ministers who met in each other's capitals at the risk of their lives that threat has receded, but agreements at the top have still to be carried out in local areas where fear stalks and confidence has vanished. There is much lost ground to be recovered, and much new faith to be created, before the Hindu-Muslim unity for which Gandhi died can become a fact.

The distress which partition and its consequences have brought to India has amused some cynical commentators. They compare these troubles with the hopeful expectation that the removal of alien rule would bring the millennium, and point triumphantly to the departure from Gandhian principles of politicians confronted with imminent war on their own soil. But India is not the only country which has sought, with Sarojini Naidu, to pluck the moon from the skies, and has fallen into the Slough of Despond instead. No temporary chaos can discredit the new non-violent technique by which Gandhi carried

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revolution to victory. No failure on the part of contemporary Indians will erase from human memory the leadership which took morality into politics, and from India set new standards of behaviour in national policies and international relations.

“There will never be enduring peace,” writes Aldous Huxley in his Introduction to the Isherwood-Prabhavananda translation of the *Gita*, “unless and until human beings come to accept a philosophy of life more adequate to the cosmic and psychological facts than the insane idolatries of nationalism.” A quarter of a century earlier, Tagore had defined such a philosophy; it was ultimately to be the joint contribution of Gandhi and himself to civilisation.

“In India,” he wrote, “the history of humanity is seeking to elaborate a specific ideal, to give to general perfection a special form which shall be for the gain of all humanity—nothing less than this is its end and aim.”

The world has already seen the unique shape of that “special form.” Its elaboration awaits the dawn of another day.



## II—BEFORE ADVENTURE

“To harmonise great enemies we must possess that which far surpasses enmity.”

Lao Tze.

I CANNOT REMEMBER WHEN India began to mean more to me than a large red space on the map of the world.

Probably this extension of my consciousness started as long ago as 1926, when Winifred Holtby, the author of *South Riding*, returned from a visit to South Africa. Fired with the same idealistic impulse to liberate native Africans from exploitation that to-day expresses itself through the work of Michael Scott, she also described to me the humiliations endured by the Indian settlers, and the part which Mohandas K. Gandhi had played as their leader.

This South African epoch was the first of the three periods into which an American commentator, John Haynes Holmes, has divided the Mahatma's life. In the second and longest period, 1914-47, Gandhi worked out the discipline and programme which finally freed India. In the third and shortest, 15th August, 1947, to 30th January, 1948, he used his moral authority to limit the spread of communal violence, which involved only 5 per cent of India's population and 10 per cent of her territory, and ended by sacrificing his life for Hindu-Muslim unity.

During the earliest period, 1894-1914, Gandhi first realised what it meant to be a coloured man in a country dominated by white peoples. He abandoned the social status to which his profession as a lawyer entitled him, and began to identify himself with the exploited and oppressed. In South Africa he first tested the principle of non-violence with which history will always identify him, and found it effective in achieving a political end.

The year after Winifred Holtby's return to England, Katherine Mayo's book, *Mother India*, set the circulating library public talking about India with more curiosity than sympathy. I felt no desire to read the book—the type of document which Gandhi called “a drain-inspector's report” had few attractions for me—but the temporary sensation that it caused first stirred an

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impulse to investigate for myself. Some years later, when Miss Mayo, an American citizen, visited England, I attended a public meeting in which a vehement altercation took place between her and the late Eleanor Rathbone, perpetual champion of the human underdog.

In 1931, for the first and only time, I saw Mahatma Gandhi when he came to England to attend the Round Table Conference. Others have recorded his arrival at Folkestone, wearing only a loin-cloth and a small khaddar shawl to protect him against the English climate on that foggy November day. Apart from a little troupe of his disciples and an umbrella which shielded his bald head from the rain, he landed and travelled to London unguarded.

It was typical of him to refuse the comfort of a West-End hotel. He chose instead to live at Kingsley Hall in Bow, the East-End settlement founded by Muriel and Doris Lester in memory of their brother. Reluctantly he agreed to the establishment of a more central headquarters at 88 Knightsbridge, where Agatha Harrison, the unofficial Quaker ambassador of goodwill between England and India, recalls "a constant stream of visitors from all over the world." Dr. Maude Royden Shaw has described his visit to her London centre of Christian worship, the Guildhouse, and his address on voluntary poverty given "in a tense and living silence" to the crowds both inside and outside the church. The same silence, due to the anxiety of his listeners to hear every word spoken by that thin, high voice, prevailed at the luncheon in a Victoria Street restaurant to which my husband and I were invited.

At this luncheon, in deference to Gandhi's vegetarian principles, only fruit was served. When we had finished our oranges and bananas he addressed us, a little brown wiry man of sixty-two who appeared ageless. He did not seem old, but it was impossible to believe that he had ever been young. Still clad only in his loin-cloth and a white khaddar cloak, he spoke in matter-of-fact tones on a matter-of-fact subject related to the one sentence that I remember—"the way to keep the body nice." With his small stature, toothless mouth, and spectacled eyes, he owed nothing to physical attraction; but no one ever needed it less.

During the nineteen-thirties, my interest in India slowly in-

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creased as my information grew. On the platforms where I sometimes stood beside Agatha Harrison and Krishna Menon, now High Commissioner for India in London, my speeches echoed the words of C. F. Andrews: "England cannot be England to me, the England I love, if she holds down India by military force."

When Andrews wrote that sentence in 1920, Gandhi had just announced his fivefold programme of national regeneration: the redemption of the outcaste, the brotherhood of Hindu and Muslim, the honouring of women, freedom from drink and drugs, and the practice of *swadeshi*. This word, meaning literally "one's own country," signified the local provision of essential goods and independence of foreign imports.

In 1934 I formed my first friendship with an Indian—a friendship which the international stresses of seventeen years have left unimpaired. To England during that year came Amiya Chakravarty, the young Bengali poet who had travelled in many countries as secretary to Rabindranath Tagore. He brought with him a personal letter from Tagore himself.

"Amiya C. Chakravarty has been most intimately associated with me for the past several years as my library secretary and been on the Editorial Board and on the Governing Body of the Santiniketan University. For six years now Prof. Chakravarty has also served with distinction as Professor of English Literature in Visva-Bharati. Our relationship has always been of the happiest character and it is with a sense of deep personal loss that I contemplate parting with him even for a season . . .

"Prof. Chakravarty has decided to spend some time in Europe to carry on research work of his own in a quiet cultural centre, perhaps one of the great European Universities might serve best, where he will find intellectual stimulation and inspiration for his creative work . . . I shall, therefore, highly appreciate any assistance which may be rendered him by my friends on the Continent or in England, in enabling him to find opportunities of creative work in the midst of those great souls in the West who are devoted to the promotion of international amity and inter-cultural understanding. I feel sure that with his scholarship, and his brilliant intellectual gifts he will be able to make outstanding contribution to our common task of bringing humanity together . . .

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“ As advancing age and considerations of health make it highly improbable that I shall make further journeys to the West, I take this opportunity of commending my friend to my many friends in Europe and wish for him that same hospitality and inspiration from the West which I have enjoyed so frequently, the remembrance of which abides with me in rare sweetness.”

Amiya was received as a graduate student by Balliol College, Oxford ; entertained by the P.E.N. Club ; and welcomed at the homes of many writers, including Winifred Holtby, my husband, and myself. He was especially charming with children ; as he talked to us of the literary renaissance which had centred round Tagore in Bengal, he held our son or daughter on his knee. The children, then aged six and four, awaited his visits with eager anticipation. He was their first non-European friend, a magician from the India which they came to regard as a treasure-house easily outrivalling the picturesque resources of the *Arabian Nights*.

In spite of these happy relationships with English authors and their families, Amiya's experience of “ hospitality and inspiration from the West ” was not as wholly fortunate as Tagore had hoped. One afternoon Winifred Holtby took him to tea at a West-End club, which she had recently joined with one or two colleagues from *Time and Tide*.

She subsequently received an indirect request from the Club, asking her to refrain in future from bringing “ members of non-European races ” to its premises. At once she sent a letter to the Secretary, protesting against “ this curious limit ” since she had a number of friends belonging to various nationalities.

“ I should be grateful,” she wrote, “ if you would tell me first, exactly what the rule is, secondly, to what races it applies. Would it, for instance, apply to the wife of the President of a Theological College in New Zealand who, although born in Scotland of Scottish parentage, had an Indian great-grandmother and appears far more Indian than European ? Would it apply to members of Oriental races such as the Japanese, who are now, I understand, regarded in German anthropological text books as ‘ to all intents and purposes Aryans.’ Bengalese, such as Professor Chakravarty, are Aryans. Therefore I suppose the difficulty lies in the pigment of their skins. Does this also apply

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to members of other Aryan races, such as the Portuguese and Spanish, who are sometimes reduced, by the action of the sun, to a pigmentation even darker than my rather light Bengalese friend? I should be very glad if you would bring this matter before a Club Committee and obtain a clear rule upon it."

The response came two months later, reporting that a vote taken from the Club membership had been "overwhelmingly in favour" of excluding members and guests "of Oriental and similar Racial Origin," and adding with belated apology that the inquiry had no reference to Jewish members.

Winifred, already ill and dying, returned to the charge; her final letter to the Secretary was sent on 1st October, 1934, only twelve months before her death.

"It is interesting," she commented, "to note that an overwhelming vote was received in so short a time from members of the Club. In the circumstances I regret that I can no longer retain my membership. Being myself a member of the Aryan race, and therefore of similar racial origin to Indian and other Oriental nationalities, I naturally feel that I am no longer entitled to be a member of a club whose members do not, in current society, meet 'individuals of races similar to those of Oriental origin.'"

"I am delighted to learn, however, that according to the ethnological terms of your notice, Negroes and Mongols are presumably not banned."

Her resignation was followed by that of her friends from *Time and Tide*. Meanwhile I had been moved by similar indignation to test the reactions of a first-class London hotel. I invited Amiya to tea at Grosvenor House, which emerged from the experiment with pennons flying. At the table, neither aggressively conspicuous nor deliberately inconspicuous, which I had selected in the public lounge, he was served with as much courtesy as if he had been a leading member of the British aristocracy.

Amiya chose that afternoon to relate one of his own experiences at the hands of a British ruler of India, who had justified Tagore's comment that the representatives of Western domination did not always present to Indians the highest that their racial culture had attained. In his early youth, he said, he had been flung out of a railway carriage window by a "pukka sahib",

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when he had stumbled, after a rush for a train, into the compartment occupied by this official and his wife.

"For a long time I lay on my back in the scrub," said Amiya in the gentle meditative accents which damned that human outrage so much more effectively than the raucous utterances of passion. "I can remember to this day my thoughts as I lay there."

A year later he came to Winifred's funeral without knowing of the ironic war which she had waged on his behalf against the vulgar pretensions of a small social club. He was not told of it till fifteen years afterwards, when prejudiced minor officials had no longer any power to hurt the international representative of a free India. Amiya may now feel proud that he helped to bring the change of attitude which has made the great majority of British people repudiate colour-bars, and was crystallised in the judgment given by Mr. Justice Birkett against the hotel which had refused to admit the West Indian cricketer, Learie Constantine.

In January, 1936, another representative of India, destined for even greater eminence, came to our house. Jawaharlal Nehru, visiting England, had told our friend Lord Lothian, who had recently been Under-Secretary of State for India, of his wish to make contact with members of the Labour Party. Lord Lothian wrote to my husband suggesting that he should invite some of the younger politicians to meet him; in consequence it was at a tea-party in our home that we saw Nehru for the first time, a slight, handsome man of medium height, with an olive skin and fine dark eyes. Awaiting him amongst others was Arthur Creech Jones, later Colonial Secretary; John Parker, already a Labour Member of the House of Commons; R. H. Crossman, Ivor Thomas, and Evan Durbin, the young politician who was subsequently drowned while saving a child on the Cornish coast.

After tea my husband thought it appropriate to show Nehru an engraved portrait of Thomas Jefferson, a statesman whom he had always admired. In some ways Jefferson's career appeared comparable to Nehru's, though Jefferson, like Gandhi, was an advocate of economic and political decentralisation; he had desired an American federation consisting not merely of forty-eight states, but of many thousands of self-governing wards comparable to the village republics which were Gandhi's economic ideal. In spite of a deep-rooted prejudice against

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autograph-hunters, G. asked Nehru on the inspiration of the moment if he would care to sign our picture.

Nehru took a pencil from his pocket and inscribed his name ; in fading characters " Jawaharlal Nehru " can still be deciphered on the back of the portrait. Nehru's signature did not mean that he endorsed Jefferson's economic policy or Gandhi's ; he has never fully accepted either Gandhi's pacifism or his " Constructive Programme."

Three years later came the Second World War, and a hardening of the strained relations between Britain and India. Within a few hours and without her consent, India, struggling for self-determination, found herself defined by the British Government as a belligerent country in a conflict of which the All-India Congress Committee did not approve. Gandhi could then have crippled the war effort in India by immediate mass Civil Disobedience. In spite of protests from his followers he refrained from doing so, for on humanitarian grounds his sympathies were with Britain against Hitler. But in September, 1940, the Congress passed an historic resolution at its meeting in Bombay.

" The All-India Congress Committee sympathises with the British people as well as the peoples of all other countries involved in the war. Congressmen cannot withhold their admiration for the bravery and endurance shown by the British nation in the face of danger and peril. They have no ill will against them and the spirit of Satyagraha (non-violent resistance) forbids Congress from doing anything with a view to embarrassing them. But this self-imposed restraint cannot be taken to the extent of self-extinction. Congress must insist on the fullest freedom to pursue its policy based on non-violence."

The British supporters of India's demand for independence came to regard her as the test of Britain's claim to be fighting for democracy against totalitarianism. Throughout the years in which contacts were severed and the emotions and aspirations of India and Britain became ever more widely separated, their sympathies remained with the growing Civil Disobedience movement which was India's protest against British policy.

In October, 1940, when Jawaharlal Nehru was serving a sentence of four years' imprisonment, I received a letter from Begum Hamid Ali, then President of the All-India Women's

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Conference. This powerful organisation of politically-minded women supported the policy of the Congress. They had recently passed their own Resolution, reaffirming their belief in non-violence as "the only means of ensuring a lasting peace," and calling upon the women of India to "give a lead to the women of the world in this respect."

The letter from Begum Hamid Ali invited me to attend, as a British delegate, the 1940 Session of the Conference, which was to meet at the end of December in Mysore. International journeys were then becoming difficult, but I learned that, if I travelled via America by air, I could reach South India in time. I was anxious to go, since even personal contacts between two peoples so rapidly drifting apart seemed to have their value. Several English sympathisers did their best to help me, but as an advocate of Indian freedom and a war-resister I was refused the necessary exit permit.

The All-India Women's Conference remained characteristically undaunted, and in 1941 they invited me again. This time the notice was longer, and help from home could be more effective. Supported by a strong liaison committee of British women's organisations, of which only one shared my attitude towards the war, I obtained an interview with Mr. L. S. Amery, then Secretary of State for India.

It was clear from the start that the interview, accorded to me as a courtesy to my friends, would not succeed though it lasted for half an hour. Again the difficulty was not transport, but my political outlook.

"If we could agree to your going," said Mr. Amery, "every facility available to us would be placed at your disposal. But we feel that your presence might only embarrass an already tense situation. It could be used as a stick with which to beat the British Government."

A stick! I thought. Surely he was greatly exaggerating my importance? But perhaps the Indians, in their desperation, were prepared to make use even of twigs. I desired, I said, only to work for reconciliation and make personal contacts, but my plea was quite ineffective.

The effort to mitigate official disapproval had not been easy. As I rose formally to take my leave Mr. Amery regarded me intently, and behind his departmental ruthlessness I thought I



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detected a look of sympathy—the sympathy felt by a just man who believes himself compelled to treat an honest citizen as a liability to the State. Knowing now of the personal suffering which he must then have realised was bound to come to him, I am sure that the feeling of sympathy was there.

In India this second refusal of an exit permit aroused precisely the reaction that might have been expected. That year the President of the All-India Women's Conference was Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nehru's beautiful sister who is now Indian Ambassador to Washington. Commenting on my enforced absence from the Conference, she remarked: "The decision was unfortunate. At this critical period in the relationship between the people of India and those of England, human contacts are important. Miss Vera Brittain would have forged another link in that chain of friendship between our peoples which this organisation has been trying to create."

In the August before the Conference met, Rabindranath Tagore had died in Calcutta. His claim to the respect of British readers had first been established thirty years earlier at the house of Sir William Rothenstein, the artist. That evening, during a visit by Tagore to London, W. B. Yeats had read to a distinguished group of English writers some of the poet's translations of his own work into English from his native Bengali. The London publication of *Gitanjali* was followed by world-wide fame, which brought a British knighthood and the first award of the Nobel Prize to a non-European.

After the Amritsar massacre in 1919, Tagore renounced this knighthood in a dignified letter of protest. It was published in a selection of his works prepared for the Memorial Meeting held at Conway Hall in the autumn of 1941 during a lull in the air raids. As I listened to Beatrix Lehmann reading from his poems I felt as though I had lost a personal friend, and regretted yet more the restriction on my movements which had deprived me of a last opportunity to meet him. My own humiliation at the hands of the British Government had stirred a deeper compassion for India, and for all who struggled against contempt and rejection for a moral or political ideal. That winter I began a short book, entitled *Humiliation With Honour* and dedicated "To the Victims of Power," which opened with a quotation from Tagore's poem, *The Sunset of the Century* :

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“ Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud and the powerful  
With your white robe of simpleness.  
Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul ;  
Build God’s throne daily upon the ample bareness of your poverty,  
And know that which is huge is not great and pride is not everlasting.”

The year 1942 saw the crisis of the war in India. With March came the failure of the Cripps mission, a brave but inadequate attempt to bring light into the Eastern darkness. In *The Observer*, J. L. Garvin referred apocalyptically to “ that incalculable sphere of impassioned traditions and strange imaginative forces.”

Had Sir Stafford Cripps been the Archangel Gabriel, he might well have been defeated by the task of mending with a new patch the torn and tattered garment of Anglo-Indian relations. But the war-time separation between British and Indian leaders had at least been bridged ; the effort itself was a challenge to generosity. Sir Stafford, said *The Times*, judged that “ failure to succeed was a lesser evil than failure to make the attempt.” In a similar spirit, Mr. Nehru responded.

“ We cannot afford to be bitter, because bitterness clouds the mind and affects judgment at a grave crisis.”

The break in the political clouds could only be temporary ; a renewal of the Indian struggle lay in the logic of history. With the stage set for a supreme endeavour, the Working Committee of the Congress issued from Wardha its “ Quit India ” Resolution. In support of it thousands of ordinary men and women, overcoming their fear of death, prepared to yield their lives. But the rising was a revolution without a plan, for the British authorities dared not allow Gandhi time to develop his strategy. Before the movement could even be launched, the entire leadership of the Congress Party had been arrested. Gandhi himself, “ honourably confined ” in the Aga Khan’s palace at Poona, remained there until he was unconditionally released on 6th May, 1944.

In February, 1943, the British supporters of Gandhi arranged a Service of Intercession for him and for India at St. Martin-in-the-Fields. At this London church, made into a world pulpit

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by the late Canon H. R. L. Sheppard and his successors, the small congregation which met that day represented a scattered but united reconciliation movement thrust underground by the passions of the war. Most of us realised how gravely the energetic, aggressive West needed the patient contemplativeness of the East to guide it through its quarrels to a truer perspective. How could a new vision alleviate this conflict, which caused saints and leaders to be shut in prison by authorities who had never been in greater need of spiritual grace? A friend had recently compared the attitude of the Viceroy towards Gandhi's fast with that of Pilate washing his hands at the trial of Jesus.

The British Government, whether conscious of spiritual deficiencies or not, decided to recall the Viceroy, and replace him with Field-Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell. A new surge of confidence, which Wavell's speeches and literary work seemed to justify, followed this appointment; I was one of a group of women who hopefully approached Lady Wavell before their departure. But though the late Field-Marshal worked hard for conciliation, the demands made upon his imagination were greater than it would bear.

At the beginning of his administration he was faced with yet another disaster, the Bengal famine. Gradually, through newspaper reports, the British public came to realise the dimensions of that catastrophe. British authorities estimated the total number of deaths from starvation as 1,500,000; Indian sources put it as high as 3,400,000. Either figure illustrates India's average expectation of life, which at twenty-seven years is the lowest in the world.

Wherever the blame actually lay, the sufferings of Bengal seized public imagination even in war-preoccupied England, and contributed to the mood which two years later voted into power the political Party committed to India's liberation. Jawaharlal Nehru, released from prison on 15th June, 1945, described the famine as "the final judgment on British rule in India." To American friends who cabled him to attend the San Francisco Conference, he replied that his first duty lay with his own people, "who are not yet out of this valley of shadow."

In July, with the election of a new Government, the deadlock ended. The Socialist Prime Minister honoured his Party's pledge; the Mountbattens replaced the Wavells at Viceregal Lodge, and

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the British Raj withdrew from India. The final transfer of power was sudden and even unexpected. As late as February, 1947, Indian leaders who did not believe that a Labour Government would behave differently from its predecessors were still talking about the "last ditch fight" to be organised against British rule.

The liberation of India removed the ban which fear had placed upon the movements of British writers and speakers who had used their pens and voices to demand India's freedom. At once the All-India Women's Conference renewed their war-time invitations, but four years went by before I was able to visit India.

During those years, such services as I could render seemed now to be needed on the Continent of Europe; it was my husband who then travelled to India in quest of Gandhi, made contact with him and the future members of the Indian Government, and stayed with the Mountbattens at Viceregal Lodge in the period immediately preceding the transfer of power. When we went to Aldwych on 15th August, 1947, to see the green, white and orange flag of India hauled to the top of the flagpost on India House, I had just returned from a journey through the ruined German cities of the British Zone. On the flag the Wheel of Life, symbolic of both Gandhi and the Buddha, typified the hope of resurrection after the years of stagnation and death which I had seen at home and abroad.

The next time I consciously saw that flag, it was flying at half-mast. On the morning of 30th January, 1948, at the hour which corresponds with late afternoon in New Delhi, the news of Gandhi's murder came over the radio and drew me, shocked and incredulous, to Aldwych. The wireless report seemed unbelievable, but all through Westminster the informal headlines of the newspaper-sellers confirmed it :

### GANDHI SHOT DEAD GANDHI ASSASSINATED

Outside India House, though the day was cold and wet, stood little groups conversing uneasily in undertones. Too well aware of the feelings of those within to wish to intrude, I did not follow the thin stream of visitors already calling to leave condolences, but joined the forlorn crowd which gazed at the flag hanging

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disconsolately in the rain. Another opportunity, perhaps the greatest which contemporary history could offer, had vanished ; I had not met Tagore and now I should never meet Gandhi, whom I had seen briefly so many years ago.

Although he was dead, it was still Mahatma Gandhi through whom, after two decades of indirect contact, I visited India at last.

When the Second World War ended, some English Quakers and their friends had suggested to him that a group of individuals representing many countries, who were interested in his ideas and technique of peace-making, should meet him to discuss post-war problems and the creation of peace through spiritual power. Perhaps fifty could be invited, to join about twenty-five of his trusted followers ?

The Mahatma welcomed the idea. One of his friends, Nirmal Kumar Bose, a lecturer at Calcutta University who acted as Gandhi's Bengali interpreter, has stated in a pamphlet entitled *Satya and Ahimsa*\* that when the struggle for freedom ended, Gandhi saw his revolutionary supporters with a new realism. Though many had given lip-service to *Satyagraha*, or non-violent opposition which assumes the attempt to convert an enemy through love, they had merely practised passive resistance which allows the continuation of hatred.

Bose records : " India was now free and the reality was now clearly revealed to him. Now that the burden of subjection had been lifted, all the forces of good had to be marshalled in one supreme effort to build a country which forsook the accustomed method of violence in order to settle human conflicts."

Plans were made for a meeting in India during the winter of 1947-8, and Gandhi insisted that only those who had been, in his own phrase, " 100 per cent reliable " in their witness against violence should be invited to meet him. A small committee was formed ; its members included Amiya Chakravarty, then living in Calcutta.

Early in 1947, Gandhi decided that it would be wiser to postpone the Conference until the " British bayonets " had been withdrawn from India in June, 1948. The date, he thought, should therefore be moved to January, 1949, and the visitors from abroad be asked to meet him at Santiniketan, the Bengal home of Tagore and his family, and later at Sevagram, the village in the Central

\* Truth and Non-Violence.

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Provinces where he had established his latest ashram (community). Between the two sessions, he suggested, his guests ought to travel round India and become better acquainted with its needs and aspirations.

When one of the English Quakers, Horace Alexander, realised that Gandhi's mind was set on postponement until freedom became a reality, he said, half in jest : " But if we postpone the meeting for a year, will you promise still to be alive ? "

" I hope so," Gandhi answered, and proposed that those responsible for the conference should begin to prepare for it by setting aside five minutes daily to pray for peace.

" A free India will not necessarily be a peaceful India," Horace Alexander commented.

Gandhi agreed. There might still be turmoil, but he did not imagine that the visitors he intended to ask would be afraid of it. Characteristically he added : " If trouble comes, let the meeting adjourn, and we might all go to the scene of the conflict and try to quench the flames."

In January, 1948, when preparations were already advanced and India had begun to raise the 250,000 rupees required for expenses, the news of Gandhi's assassination reached his friends. A fortnight later they met in Calcutta and decided that their scheme must not be abandoned. The meeting would now be a Gandhi Memorial Conference, and no longer an opportunity for the guests from abroad to seek the Mahatma's advice, but his fellow-workers could still be met and his Constructive Programme studied. India, though no longer non-violent owing to the disasters following partition, remained the country which had received the inspiration of his teaching. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, soon to become President of India, promised that he would try to take Gandhi's place.

Further postponement was unavoidable. Gandhi's death had upset many plans ; the funds needed were still incomplete ; transport was not yet available either by sea or by air. It was not until December, 1949, that the Conference became a reality.

As one of the first guests to be invited from outside India, I called at India House upon my old acquaintance Krishna Menon, now the Indian High Commissioner after a long and hard apprenticeship endured with great courage. Remembering the platforms

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which we had shared in previous years, he greeted me informally. "Hallo ! How are you ?"

When we had talked for a short time, I remarked that it must be a happy experience to occupy his present position after the long period of frustration.

"Happy !" he exclaimed. "It does not matter whether I am happy or unhappy. I do my job !"

But I declined to be reproved. "Not many human beings see their dreams come true. You are among the few who have."

I called afterwards on the High Commissioner for Pakistan, where another dream had been tempestuously fulfilled. I had yet to learn that Pakistan viewed the proposed Conference with suspicion, and realised only later the measure of the courtesy with which Mr. Habib Rahimtoola received me. I hoped, I said, to visit Pakistan after leaving India, for otherwise my knowledge of the issues between the two countries would be incomplete. He promised his help and gave me letters of introduction to the Ministers of Information and Education in Pakistan's capital, Karachi. Still further co-operation came from his Press Attaché, Mr. Salman A. Ali, who took me out to lunch and supplied much useful information.

Late in November, some of the delegates travelling to India by air met at India House; three had come from the United States, one from Finland, and two from France. Gravely the High Commissioner warned his British and foreign guests not to expect too much spiritual progress in India.

"You will see many things to shock and horrify you," he insisted with a candour which our experience was to justify. "Don't look for a promised land just because it was the home of Gandhiji."

Soon after dawn next day, a group of friends saw us off from the Air Terminal at Victoria. Encouraged by their solicitude to face the raw, misty morning, we gathered ourselves and our luggage into the waiting coach and drove off through the fog.

### III—FLIGHT TO CALCUTTA

“ I think it is a good augury for the future that the old conflict between India and England should be resolved in this friendly way which is honourable to both countries. There are too many disruptive forces in the world for us to throw our weight in favour of further disruption, and any opportunity that offers itself to heal old wounds and to further the cause of co-operation should be welcomed.”

Jawaharlal Nehru. Broadcast from New Delhi,  
10th May, 1949.

AT LONDON AIRPORT we were summoned promptly to the Pan-American Constellation plane on which the High Commissioner had reserved ten places. I said good-bye to my husband, but almost immediately came the order to disembark ; owing to “ deteriorating conditions ” in Brussels, our first stop, the plane could not leave until midday.

Soon after noon a further hour's delay was announced, and we lunched at the airport. Finally, the half-dozen Belgian passengers who had come with the plane from New York were taken off to await better weather ; Brussels airport had succumbed to fog and was closed for the day. At 1.45 instead of 10.15, we departed at last. After circling the tarmac for a long time, the plane started on a direct flight to Damascus, over 2,000 miles away. The illuminated instructions above the door leading to the pilot's cabin ordered us to keep our safety-belts fastened, as we were flying “ blind ” through thick mist.

In the fast-fading light of the winter afternoon, I looked at my fellow delegates. We were eleven altogether—Ray Newton, Grace Rhoads, Igal Roodenko, and Dr. Mordecai Johnson, the Negro President of Howard University, from the United States ; Yrjo Kallinen, ex-Minister of Defence, and Pastor Erik Ewalds from Finland ; Pastor Henri Roser and Jerome Sauerwein from France ; Professor Olaf Rydbeck from Sweden ; and my compatriot Wilfred Wellock, seventy-year-old economist and former M.P. If we crashed into some unexpected object in the fog, the World Conference would be deprived of one-fifth of its foreign visitors.



## *Flight to Calcutta*

We were destined to keep our assignment. The plane, climbing to 18,000 feet, swung into sunshine ; below, the cloud ceiling looked as firm as a snow-field. As we flew above Dieppe, Paris, and Lyons, all equally invisible, the sinking sun blazed over the dense clouds, burnishing the white with red-gold.

To be carried through the air like a parcel, without even the coloured relief-map of the land usually seen below to give a key to our position, seemed an oddly mechanical prelude to a Far Eastern conference. Although I have flown so often, I still believe that such rapid transit to an unfamiliar scene is more than the human organism can comfortably endure. It makes too heavy a demand on the power of adjustment, so closely related to time and space.

At twilight we reached the South of France. The heavy clouds suddenly broke ; through the gap I looked down on the lights of Marseilles, scintillating round a south-western horseshoe of coast. Above the port the flaming after-glow of the sunset seemed subdued in comparison with the brilliant crescent moon in a deep sapphire sky.

As we bumped over Corsica with safety-straps fastened, I glanced through the documents which had been sent from India to prepare us for the Conference. One of them outlined several alternative itineraries, with visits to colleges, training centres, rural schools and other Gandhian institutions, which travellers might choose in the fortnight's interval between the two meetings. Another posed some fundamental questions for delegates to consider. What is the spirit that takes away the occasion of war ? How can history and citizenship be so taught as to prevent the growth of narrow nationalism and foster the development of world loyalty ? Is all Trusteeship hypocritical ? Can the present machinery of the United Nations Organisation be made more effective ?

We should not, it seemed, lack material for discussion. Just where that discussion would carry us was less evident, but at least we should meet men and women from all over the world who were anxious to approach human problems in a constructive spirit and discuss their proposals "in unhurried conference." The word "unhurried" was encouraging. It suggested that this Eastern meeting would have little in common with the overloaded agendas of Western conferences which I normally ran miles to avoid.

## *Search After Sunrise*

The crescent moon was misty now and sinking fast towards the horizon, but the stars became brighter and appeared more numerous as we flew south-east. The plane, so long airborne, began to descend ; a great congregation of lights indicated that we were nearing Damascus. How human they seemed and how super-national, symbols of man's habitation and his universal emotions !

The flashing beacon of the aerodrome welcomed the plane as it landed. I had hoped for an impression of Damascus, but the city was miles from the airport ; that ancient scene of St. Paul's conversion remains for me only a memory of coffee drunk at midnight in a restaurant where the tables were covered with freshly-laundered cloths, and fragrant white roses stood in vases on window-sills. The temperature was that of England in May.

Sleep seemed improbable in a plane which had become warm and close from standing still, but after two more hours in the air I awoke with a start to see the sun rising over the Iraqi Desert from an orange-hued horizon. For a few moments the colours of sky and sand were as delicate as an opal ; then the soft blue and pale rose vanished above the endless brown miles, terrible, implacable, unbroken by tree or blade of grass.

After more than an hour no sign had appeared of human occupation ; at last an undulating black line led to a group of small huts with corrugated iron roofs on the rim of the Persian Gulf. To live there must have been an earthly approach to hell, with no green to relieve the eye in a vista of red-brown desert and interminable sea. Over the Gulf itself a strange cloud formation, like stalactites and stalagmites formed out of snow, hid the dark water from the plane.

Throughout this journey the travellers to India changed places from time to time, getting better acquainted and exchanging ideas. The youngest American, Igal Roodenko, a tall dark-haired man whose name suggested a Slavonic ancestry, now took the chair beside me. He reported his conversation with a commercial traveller across the corridor, going east to interview an Indian magnate on behalf of his firm.

" You're rather unlucky to be the only passenger without a window," Igal began.

" What's it matter ! " responded his companion glumly.

Igal tried again. " I suppose you're used to this journey ? "

## *Flight to Calcutta*

"No," was the reply. "I haven't been farther than Basra before, and that time I went by sea."

"Aren't you curious to know where we are, then?"

"Oh, no. One's always seeing things that don't record on one's mind."

Igal suggested that human reactions to new experiences were usually interesting, but the traveller found this line of thought as tedious as the scenery. When Igal departed he returned thankfully to his packet of cigarettes and bottle of Scotch.

The plane crossed the tip of Saudi Arabia, and flew bumpily along the Gulf over barren greyish-brown hills, dead and desolate as the mountains of the moon. To Igal I commented on the small proportion of the earth's surface that is actually inhabited. We were still some hundreds of miles from Pakistan when the flashing sign above the pilot's cabin again instructed us to fasten our safety-belts. At once we ran into stormy weather; heavy clouds, the air traveller's menace, blotted out visibility and seemed to press like dark curtains against the windows of the plane. In that unnatural dusk, the amiable buzz of conversation faded into silence.

An hour from Karachi we emerged, to the general relief, into fitful sunshine. After midday it strengthened, and the plane descended over the brown desert of cactus and scrub which surrounded an ochre-coloured, red-roofed city.

We lunched at Karachi Airport, walking towards the two-storied cement building in a blast of heat which advertised the tropics. Karachi itself lies outside the tropical zone; winds from the sea usually disperse the torrid air rising from the Desert of Sind.

The port with its natural harbour had been the obvious capital for Pakistan. Ten miles away amid acres of tawny sand, the civilian airport could still show us a fair sample of eastern life. Black and white goats were tethered outside the cement walls; kites hovered voraciously above us as we ate our meal. The human occupants of the airport seemed equally anti-social; the restaurant waiters were surly, the airport officials abrupt.

My knowledge of the Indo-Pakistan conflict was still elementary, but I realised that it centred upon the possession of Kashmir. Shortly after partition, a Hindu Maharajah ruling a

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mainly Muslim population had acceded to India. The Indian Government insisted that this accession was legal ; the Pakistan Government protested that it had been carried out against the wishes of the Kashmiris themselves. Both Governments had sent in troops, now uneasily quiescent after a " Cease Fire " imposed by the United Nations Organisation.

In two years the dispute, like a sinister snowball, had gathered other sources of tension. Grievances had arisen over the evacuated property of Hindus who had fled from Pakistan into India, and of Muslims who had left India for Pakistan. The Pakistanis feared Indian reprisals on rivers and canals which watered their land but rose in India ; the jute-mills of West Bengal stood idle while the raw jute was withheld by the growers of East Pakistan. India's latest complaint lay against Pakistan's undervalued rupee, which made trade between the two countries impossible after Indian devaluation.

Until relations improved, Pakistan officials were unlikely to welcome the Westerners who were merely using their airport as a convenience on the way to India. As I boarded the plane, I decided to try a Gandhian experiment. Shaking hands with the two officers who stood glumly on either side of the portable stairway, I told them that I hoped to return to their country.

" I shall be seeing you again," I said, " I'm coming back to stay for a time."

The morose faces brightened ; the two handshakes expressed positive cordiality. Gandhi, it seemed, had been right as usual in his diagnosis of human reactions.

We climbed above the Sind Desert, broken only by the huge serpentine windings of the Indus. Behind the plane the sun was setting, its copper glow reflected in the surface of the water as it sank into dun-coloured clouds. Sunset and sunrise are the flyer's spectacular joy, just as fog and sudden storms are his nightmare.

In the mild Indian winter, with the monsoon two months past, there were no more storms to fear. Ten thousand feet below, tiny squares of cultivated earth revealed man's determination to stay alive on a barren soil. A chapter of India's economic history lay spread before our eyes.

" What a land for a populous nation to inherit," I thought. " How ruthless the climate, how hostile the ground ! "

The plane left Sind to cross the Thar Desert in the northern

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half of Rajputana, divided from the richer south of the Province by the Aravalli Hills. We had reached a country of vast dust-ridden distances, crossed for immemorial centuries by uncomplaining bullocks and cynically patient camels. The crescent moon rose over the brown anonymous wastes; darkness swallowed the plodding animals, less anxious to end their long slow journeys than the impatient heirs of an age of speed.

At Delhi, cold in the northern night air, we stayed only twenty minutes. Reluctant to fall asleep during the final period of the flight, I talked of the French Resistance movement with Jerome Sauerwein, a handsome Appeal Court lawyer and the son of Jules Sauerwein, Foreign Editor until 1940 of *Paris-Soir*. He wanted, he said, to experiment with Gandhi's technique of non-violence even if this created opposition in the French Bar, and hoped to solve some of the legal difficulties raised by India's liberation for the French inhabitants of Pondicherry.

In spite of the late hour, a deputation awaited us at Dum-Dum Airport outside Calcutta; Agatha Harrison was there with two Conference secretaries, a bearded Quaker addressed as "Leslie," and the representative of Pan-American Airways. In spite of their combined efforts, our party took two hours to clear the Customs. I was soon to become better acquainted with India's time-perspectives, which are related not to things temporal but to things eternal.

When our form-filling and bag-opening had ended, the hour was midnight and too late for long journeys to private households. We bundled ourselves into a series of waiting cars and were driven to various destinations. Three of the men shared the only vacant bedroom in a crowded central hotel; I, as the odd woman over, occupied a large single room in another. My windows overlooked the Maidan, or open space, which gives a green, park-like appearance to congested Calcutta.

As we drove the eight miles from the airport, a peculiar odour floated through the open windows of the car; it was the smell of homeless unwashed humanity in a warm climate. Looking into the mild darkness, I saw the recumbent forms of still unhoused refugees from Pakistan asleep on the pavement. About six million had fled into India during the communal frenzy which followed partition, a number equivalent to the increased population of Calcutta itself.

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When the car had deposited the men, Agatha Harrison accompanied me to the third-floor bedroom of my hotel. For this I was grateful. Previous travels had not brought me to the East : I was uncertain what courtesies to observe or precautions to take. The bathroom leading out of the bedroom had European-style taps, bath-tub and lavatory ; I had still to learn how fortunate I was to start off with toilet apparatus which I knew how to use.

The comfortable temperature of the night surprised me ; I had supposed that Calcutta, even in winter, would be hotter than this. Unexpected too was the absence of insect life ; in my room so far above the street, a mosquito-net was not even provided. I never used one until I reached the southern city of Trivandrum, and found even then that I slept better without it. Still scarcer were the snakes against which I had pictured myself as perpetually on guard ; in that winter season not even a grass snake appeared in any house or hotel where I stayed.

I had slept only two hours in the previous thirty-six, but when Agatha Harrison had gone I did not feel ready for sleep. In the lounge I asked for an orange squash ; though the time was nearing 1.30 a.m., the waiters were still on duty and the room was occupied by groups of Indians and Europeans, drinking and talking. India does not so much cultivate night-life, as merge its days into its nights and its nights into its days ; on railway-stations and in city streets, the crowds shouting, singing and conversing in shrill staccato voices do not noticeably diminish during the small hours. Only the Europeans, I observed, drank spirits ; the Indians, like myself, had ordered soft drinks.

Over the large tumblerful of yellow liquid, I sat thinking about the refugees. Between two and three million, I learned afterwards, were being resettled in agricultural districts of the East Punjab, but India's proportion of reclaimable land was smaller than Pakistan's. The rest had somehow to be absorbed by the country, a problem made no easier for the Government by the Hindu liability to philosophical resignation. Many refugees belonged to the petty trading class, and could only reinstate themselves in their own trade at the expense of others already practising it.

In Calcutta and Delhi I was to see the booths of street-vendors in front of established shops, and pavement stalls blocking

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dignified colonnades intended for more formal buyers and sellers who now found it difficult to get into contact. The practice of non-violent mass resistance to elementary hygiene by the poorer refugees did not help the authorities in their unequal battle against dirt and epidemics.

Sri Priyaranjan Sen, the lecturer in English at Calcutta University who translated Gandhi's post-prayer discourses into Bengali for the All-India Radio, has preserved his observations on refugees when reports of rape, loot and murder filled the Press of India and Pakistan. It was "unbecoming," said the Mahatma, for men and women to permit themselves to be bullied out of their homes.

"They should stay there and face death rather than dishonour and loss of self-respect. They should fear none but God. They should defend their religion and their honour with their lives. If they did not have that courage it was far better for them to go away. If they had decided to leave East Bengal, it was the duty of upper-class Hindus, such as the doctors, the lawyers, and the merchants, to see that poor scheduled castes and others went first. They themselves should be the last and not the first to leave."

The world now knows that millions "did not have that courage" which defies death rather than seek refuge in flight. If a few hundreds had possessed it, might those displaced millions have been able to stay?

It was a question disturbing enough to trouble a sounder sleep than mine.

## IV—FORMER CAPITAL

“ When we shall have made our country our own by sacrifice and established our claim to it by applying our own powers, for its reclamation, then we shall not need to stand abjectly at the Englishman’s door. And if we are not abject, the Englishman need not lower himself. Then we may become colleagues. . . . Only when she (India) can meet him as his equal, will all reason for antagonism, and with it all conflict, disappear. Then will the East and West unite in India—country with country, race with race, knowledge with knowledge, endeavour with endeavour. Then will the History of India come to an end, merged in the History of the World which will begin.”

Rabindranath Tagore. *Greater India.*

I N AN ATTEMPT to catch up with the lost hours of sleep, I had ordered breakfast to be brought to my room at 9 a.m. Immediately after the turbaned bearer had deposited the tray, a native tailor was admitted bringing samples of undistinguished cloth. For several minutes, while my coffee grew cold, he tried to persuade me to order a dress, and was only convinced with great difficulty that I had all the clothing I required.

This experience suggested that European visitors staying in hotels were still assumed to be “ pukka sahibs,” who had their predecessors in India to thank if they were now regarded as fair game. I decided henceforth to accept private hospitality whenever it was offered, and never stayed in an hotel again except as a Government guest.

When the persistent tailor had gone a large kite settled down on the outdoor verandah, though to my relief it did not attempt to enter the room. Not knowing the habits of Calcutta kites, I felt uncertain whether it was merely anticipating scraps of my breakfast or waiting for someone to throw me out of the window. Uncomfortable memories returned of a spring in Jamaica, where the kites which lived in the palms of the Kingston hotel garden swung into the air whenever I entered the swimming pool. They hovered above it until I had finished, presumably hoping that I should drown.

With the kite so close I did not feel like further sleep, and after



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a series of notes and telephone messages had been delivered there seemed to be no choice but to get up and confront the day. Another interruption occurred as I was dressing, in the form of a bedroll ordered by the Conference Secretary from Thomas Cook & Son. In India all long-distance travellers carry their bedding around with them, transforming the resistant day-time seats of the railway coaches into Wagon-lits by the simple addition of a thin camp mattress, a couple of rough brown blankets, a small hard pillow complete with case, and two stalwart cotton sheets.

Although the brilliant Indian sun was swiftly mounting the sky, the temperature seemed to be no higher than a pleasant eighty degrees. Going out on the verandah, I looked across the main street of Calcutta to the wide stretch of short and unexpectedly green grass on the other side. Unlike an English common the Maidan was almost unbroken by trees or shrubs ; there appeared to be no Indian equivalent of blackthorn, gorse, and may. But vivid flowering trees lined the central streets of this modern city ; one, in its fiery extravagance of scarlet, resembled the " Flame of the Forest " which I had seen in Jamaica. What was its Indian name ? I subsequently asked an acquaintance, but she did not know. When I returned home, my husband identified it as a gold mohur.

This type of native ignorance is not peculiar to India. How many of my Chelsea friends could name the trees in the sub-tropical garden of Battersea Park, or even the more homely specimens facing the Thames along the riverside path ? But the ubiquity of this indifference to everyday beauty does not reconcile me to it. As a lover of flowers and trees, one of my first quests in a new country is always a book on its native plants. Unfortunately such books are difficult to find in places which enjoy a rich vegetation and take its loveliness for granted.

Having no idea of locations and directions, I took a taxi to the Conference centre in Upper Wood Street, which proved to be about a mile away. This large house, the headquarters of the Friends' Service Unit in India and Pakistan, was used as a meeting-place for the students of various faiths and a refuge for travellers from many nations passing through Calcutta. Its normal staff, an Indian, an American, and a New Zealander, typified its international outlook. To deal with the work of the

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Conference, these three had been reinforced by Indian volunteers.

In the upstairs common-room the visitors who had already arrived received preliminary instructions, together with an intimidating schedule of public and private functions. Passports and photographs were taken away by the Security Police, though the British delegates soon discovered that this precaution did not apply to them. Some rags and tatters of privilege were left over, it seemed, from the process of relinquishing the status of an Occupying Power.

Our formidable programme, we learned, would not begin until to-morrow. This afternoon, by plane, train, car and bus, travellers were arriving from all quarters of the globe and every corner of India; trunks, suit-cases and kitbags littered the hall and stairway of the Friends' Centre. I had already made contact with my publishers' Calcutta representative, Mr. K. R. Clemens of Macmillan, and now, with a guilty sense of relief, I escaped from the exhausting impact of new impressions and the obligation to think global thoughts, and for a short time reverted to being British.

In their ground-floor apartment Mr. Clemens and his wife, who had called for me at the hotel, welcomed me to an English tea. I had already discovered that this function was not, as in the United States, the rarity that I had feared it might be. India is the land of tea, which is served as a matter of course in the early morning and afternoon, and on railway trains and station platforms. Here I should not be faced with the blank stare of affronted surprise which greets the request for afternoon tea in an American dining car, or be driven into an oriental variant of the four o'clock tramp in search of a local drug-store.

Over tea and later at the Club still known as "English," though it no longer excluded Indian guests, we discussed the changed position of British business firms and their agents. The work of the Macmillan offices in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay was virtually unaltered; they had always specialised, not in exported works by British authors, but in vernacular text-books for which the demand, in India's many languages, would now be larger than ever. But the psychological atmosphere had been transformed, and with it the moral obligations of British commercial representatives.

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"In my opinion," Mr. Clemens said, "every business man who comes out here ought to regard himself as an ambassador of goodwill."

He went on to explain that in every position held by a British man or woman in the new India, skill in conducting public relations was even more important than the technical knowledge required to fill the post.

From Mr. Clemens and other British hosts who took me to their former "English Clubs" in various Indian cities, I learned of the changes which liberation had brought to the social life of the British who remained. The American author of *India for the Indians*, Dorothy Jane Ward, quotes the disillusioned comment of an English acquaintance who said: "To a great extent, social death has replaced social life for the average European in India."

The interpretation of this judgment depends on the meaning attached by the critic to the word "social." India now decrees that all clubs must admit members of every race, and guests at private parties are usually a mixture of Indians and Europeans. Economic stringency, for India as for England, also compels more modest entertaining. Official regulations forbid food to be served in public or private to more than twenty-four guests at a time, though the resourceful hosts who collect two parties of twenty-four at the same hotel overcome this impediment. National and provincial governments alike favour Prohibition; official functions in New Delhi are "dry," and Europeans living in Madras, where Prohibition for Indians is compulsory, must describe themselves as "addicts" to obtain a liquor licence.

Conspicuous consumption has gone with the colour bar. For the few to whom social life meant exclusive clubs and "prestige parties," the economical entertaining of free India may represent social death. To the post-liberation visitor, the disappearance of ostentation seems to have been amply compensated by the growth of cordiality between Indians and Europeans.

The Calcutta functions which preceded the Conference indicated the shape of things to come. So determined were our hosts to become acquainted with their foreign guests, that much of our time was passed in attending receptions and making speeches. The better known, by name and reputation, a visitor might be

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to India, the smaller was his or her opportunity of salvaging spare hours for private expeditions.

My programme began with a visit to the Indian Association in Bow Bazar Street at nine o'clock in the morning. This body, founded in the eighteen-seventies by the constitutionalist supporters of Congress, had set itself the massive task of making India politically conscious. Under the presidency of Dr. P. N. Banerjea, former executive officers looked gravely at us from their portraits on the white-washed walls.

The function started with the half-strident, half-wistful songs which were to become so familiar. After a welcoming address from the President, the visitors from France, America, Britain, Egypt and Indonesia were invited to speak. Claspng the bouquets of white spiky lilies presented to us on arrival we stood up in turn, speaking with nervous politeness for fear that our ignorance might precipitate some resounding blunder.

The nervousness was soon to vanish, though every visitor clutched politeness like a straw. Before long each delegate knew the speeches of all the others by heart, and could have recited his own in his sleep. By the time that our travels ran into weeks, an address by a colleague became a comfortable opportunity for a judicious nap. After being photographed, to which we also grew accustomed, and refreshed with tea and Indian sweets which were the alleviations of every function, our self-selected group departed for an official visit to the Calcutta Museum, or Jadn Ghar.

Museums are doubtless essential institutions. The treasures of the past must be preserved, though the juxtaposition of too many treasures detracts from the unique character of each picture, tapestry, and ancient embroidery. I always prefer the sentient existence of a living city to the museum atmosphere of moth-balls and genteel decay, but I owed to this particular museum a chance contact which became a mutual friendship. Waiting outside with his car for another visitor sat my future Calcutta host, Mr. K. C. Varma. Mr. Varma's reactions were mercurial and his impulses towards hospitality instantaneous.

"But of course you must come to us!" he exclaimed when he learned that I had nowhere but my hotel to go for lunch. Gathering his guest and myself into his car, he drove us to his home near the Dhakuria Lakes in South Calcutta.

The Varmas had been friends and disciples of Mahatma

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Gandhi. His portrait dominated the living-room of their apartment off the Russa Road ; his last secretary, Pyarelal, was a frequent visitor. I had seldom seen a married couple so complementary in their qualities. K. C. Varma, the father of a grown-up son and twelve-year-old daughter, always seemed gay, conversational, resourceful, and younger than his years ; his wife Amar, sensitive and thoughtful, appeared older.

Neither had much cause for gaiety ; they had been compelled to abandon their fine estate in Lahore when the post-partition riots became a Hindu massacre. But both had refused to develop the refugee mentality, which disseminated fear and hatred in India and Pakistan alike. As Gandhi's followers they had been social workers, and were now volunteers at the Friends' Centre in Upper Wood Street.

We climbed the steep stairway leading to their apartment from a large courtyard encircled by blocks of flats. In the courtyard several half-naked children mingled with a floating population of taxi-drivers, coolies, bearers, and stray dogs. For the first time I sat down to a meal in an Indian home.

Like Gandhi, the Varmas were vegetarians. Cooked vegetables and chutneys surrounded the bowl of rice on their table ; plates heaped with fruit recalled the luncheon given for Gandhi in London. Mangoes, which I had been warned to eat with discretion, were out of season ; limes, bananas, oranges and Kashmir apples made a still-life in green and gold. After inviting me to stay with them when I returned to Calcutta from Santiniketan, the Varmas drove me to a monster reception given for the Conference delegates by the Jain community in the gardens surrounding their red Parshvanath Temple.

Gandhi's family in Kathiawar had been influenced by the Jain code of ethics ; " thou shalt not take the life of a living creature " was its first commandment. The Jain principles, like his own, were woven from the fabric of India's past, owing much to such ancient writings as the Vedas and Upanishads, the laws of Manu, and the dialectics of the Vedanta. For millenia the doctrine of *Ahimsa*, or non-violence, has been part of Indian culture ; this historic fact explains why Indian pacifism, accepted in varying degrees by the majority of the people, is free from the self-righteous minoritarianism so often characteristic of pacifist movements in the West.

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The Jains especially subscribed to a principle known as "non-injury," which transcended the ethical teaching of Western Christianity, and was accepted by millions of human beings centuries before the Sermon on the Mount. The living creatures which must not be hurt either "by word or deed" included animals, insects, and even plants. Trees that sheltered the traveller from the sun, an important service in tropical countries, were regarded by the Brahmins as sentient beings, which even possessed a moral nature and could expect to go to Heaven after death.

The practice of killing for fun which some British people have fought to preserve has no place in Indian ethics. This does not mean that there is no gulf (what community has yet bridged it?) between the ideal and the actual, or that India is guiltless of a cruelty to animals which the West checks by societies for humane education and animal protection. Inefficiency and neglect mean real cruelty even to such valuable animals as cows, and still more to the half-starved pariah dogs which roam India, their diseased, emaciated bodies offering continual outrage to travellers from dog-loving Britain.

But in India the ethical conception at least is higher and the Jains make a consistent attempt to practise it, including even vermin in the life to be preserved. The logical conclusion of their doctrine would mean the end not only of blood sports but of international war. The enlightened Western citizen going East filled with missionary zeal is apt to dismiss the Jains' concern for rats and bugs as laughable, without asking whether it has not more inherent common sense than his own suicidal nationalism, which twice within a generation has subjected his fellow-humans to treatment which the Jains regard as immoral when it is visited on an ant.

Arriving late at the Jain Temple, I was offered tea and then hurried through the garden to join an internationally-assorted group of visitors on a dais overlooking the smooth green lawns. Flagged paths ran between richly-stocked flower-beds, blazing with blooms whose names I did not know. Costly Chinese vases flanked the entrances to the paths, varied by tanks containing tropical fish as brightly-hued and unfamiliar as the flowers. The red temple, decorated with glass and fragments of

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silver-coloured stone, flashed like a thousand mirrors in the afternoon sun.

The wealthy Jains had evidently gone to great expense in preparing this festival, which they described as "our modest reception." Besides putting up a large marquee to shield the speakers from the sun, they had installed a public-address system for the audience which filled the garden and must have numbered three or four thousand. I sat on a seat reserved for me at the end of a row as the speeches began. Some of the foreign visitors had already started to experiment with Indian costume; several men appeared in the white "Gandhi cap" habitually worn by Premier Nehru. The young American, Igal Roodenko, mounted the platform clad in a white khaddar dhoti and punjabi, which brought appreciative cheers as he rose to speak.

When my turn came I was introduced, like the others, by the Conference Secretary, Hiralal Bose, a young Hindu whose round face and good-humoured smile reflected his capacity for remaining unperturbed by the many harassing dilemmas in which he often found himself. As I stood up an ornate garland, like the stage version of an ecclesiastical vestment, was hung round my neck. Made of silver and gold tinsel, it was lavishly embellished with two medallions showing the Indian flag and a number of tassels in heroic shades of scarlet, magenta, pink, and green.

During the next two months I was often garlanded, an hospitable custom which has also its inconveniences. Tinsel garlands are exceptional; these ceremonial decorations were usually made from fresh flowers, cool, damp, and strongly-scented. In a hot room or sunny garden, the pungent smell of marigolds or the sweet scent of roses soon becomes overpowering to the Western nose immediately above them. But in themselves the garlands are beautiful, and appear to be produced regardless of time and expense. The speed with which they fade—the flowers being too short to be taken apart and put into water—seems to lie in direct ratio to the skill used in making them.

Conscious that I resembled an animated Christmas tree, I made my short speech looking out upon a scene which recalled the musical comedy, *Chu Chin Chow*. As the sun began to set, the birds chattering in the bushes round the canopied Pundal proved more formidable competitors than a Salvation Army

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band. Against this riot of sound I spoke of my satisfaction in coming to a free India, and mentioned a reassuring discovery which I had made with surprise.

As a British citizen I had expected to be received less cordially than the visitors from smaller States, and from peoples still struggling for their freedom. On the contrary I had met, even in two days, a measure of hospitable kindness which astonished me by its readiness to banish deep-rooted resentments and overlook the past.

"Now we're free to show you British people how much we like you!" one acquaintance had remarked. His polite candour recalled a comment made to my husband two years earlier by Mr. G. D. Birla, the Indian millionaire with whom Gandhi was staying at the time of his assassination.

"As soon as the issue of independence is settled," Mr. Birla had said, "India will bear no ill-will, and old scores will be forgotten."

From the organisers of the Conference and the hosts at official receptions, cordiality might have been expected. But the porters, taxi-drivers, railway officials, and other ordinary workers whom I met during my travels did not identify me as an author who had supported Indian independence, and yet were consistently courteous. This unresentful friendliness did not exclude a surviving pathological fear of insults and slights. From one publisher I learned that books critical of India were quietly banned by the bookshops, though Foster's *A Passage to India* was widely read, and even used as a text-book by the English departments of schools and colleges.

Dr. Kalidas Nag, a Professor from Calcutta University, replied to the visitors' speeches. Mildly he reproached me for my apprehensions.

"How could Vera Brittain, whose books we have read, imagine she was coming to an enemy country?"

He reminded the audience that in 1944 the first All-India Jain Congress had been held in that temple garden, to commemorate the 2,500th anniversary of "the first Sermon on *Ahimsa*\* delivered by Lord Mahavir."

"The great precursors of Jainism," he continued, "preached

\**Ahimsa*, according to Gandhi, means "love" in the Pauline sense, but also includes the additional "attributes" of truth, harmony, brotherhood and justice.



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*Ahimsa* as early as 1000 B.C. . . . *Ahimsa* also came to be the primary inspiration of Buddhism, which went beyond the geographical limits of India and made the whole world kin. Millions of Buddhists of India stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jains, the Vaishnavas, and other peace-loving communities of this sub-continent. Therefore India has a special claim to the active support and ardent cooperation of all the world. As their representatives you stand here to-day, our sisters and brothers from Asia and Africa, from Europe and America. When, after a month of friendly contact with your Indian brethren, you will go back to your respective countries, we request you to continue working with us for the ideals of Tagore and Gandiji, as the unofficial ambassadors of the realm of *Ahimsa* ! ”

The following morning some brilliant brain in the Upper Wood Street Office conceived the idea of sending a communal bus to collect the delegates who wished to visit one of Gandhi's ashrams ten miles from Calcutta.

Had this scheme been worked out in detail beforehand, with directions and a time-table given to the passengers and driver, it might have fulfilled its perpetrator's expectations. In practice it typified the amiable inefficiency by which Indians can madden the practical West.

When the bus arrived at each address, the visitor who had been expecting it for an hour was naturally surprised to see it, and began only then to make his preparations for the day. I was the second passenger to be collected ; when it reached my hotel at nine-thirty, the bus was already three-quarters of an hour late. My predecessor proved to be a Persian novelist, who spoke only French. We conversed periodically in this language until he relapsed into gloom as the bus meandered on its interminable mission.

At an early stage I had realised that my chance of visiting the Gandhian settlement was remote, but I appreciated this unorthodox Cook's tour round Calcutta, of which I had so far seen very little. Calcutta, or “ Kalikata,” named after the goddess Kali, resembled a Western rather than an Eastern city with its wide roads, tall buildings, and widespread docks which I was later to see along the Hooghly River. Immense contrasts of wealth and poverty had developed since the Nawab Mir Jafar rented the

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three villages of Sutanati, Kalikata and Govindpur to the English merchants of the East India Company after the Battle of Plassey.

On this mild sunny morning, with noon still distant, the main streets of the city were gaily splashed with colour. The women's bright sarees and the crimson turbans of the white-uniformed police competed with the coloured shirts of the men, who wore orange, green, scarlet, and even plaid. Alone on the top of a flight of steps, a tiny baby in a miniature pink saree observed the kaleidoscopic scenes on the pavement with enormous dark eyes.

The pavement seemed to be used for everything. Women sat there selling sweetmeats and bananas ; men were being shaved or having their hair cut in the open air. Above their heads, washing festooned the verandahs over the shops hung with Bengali signs. In the roadway bare-footed boys carried loaded trays on their heads and women balanced boxes of oranges with effortless grace. Other boys drawing rickshaws ran between cars and buses, which appeared to ignore the various forms of human transport but somehow managed to avoid a collision.

"*Tout arrive !*" remarked Pastor Roser, who had now been picked up on one of our painstaking excursions into side streets. In these narrow roadways, booths took the place of shop-windows ; their wares—fruit, vegetables, magazines, or clothing—were spread before them on the grimy pavement. Bullocks passed close to the curb, drawing incredible weights ; one cart, I noticed, was loaded with bricks.

Throughout the city, rectangles of dusty grass were spread like green table-cloths ; in the crowded courtyards between the houses grew palms and banyans. The green rectangles, sometimes equipped with swings for children, separated imposing buildings such as the red Medical School and the white Sanscrit College. Close to a street composed mainly of bookshops stood the central Y.M.C.A. In an open-air swimming-pool women were washing clothes as though the place was a public laundry.

The communal bus had now gradually filled, though occasionally an exasperated passenger gave us the slip. At one stop the Persian delegate, disconsolate beyond endurance, leapt from the exit and bravely vanished into the unfamiliar urban wilderness where he could neither understand nor be understood. From the hard corner of the wooden-seated vehicle, I examined the cows

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which shared the streets on equal terms with their miscellaneous humanity.

For Gandhi, "Mother Cow" had been an object of incessant concern; he saw her as "the Mother of Prosperity" without whom the Indian peasant could not survive. When he gave instructions to Mira Behn, formerly Madeleine Slade, for the preparation of his mud-hut at Sevagram, the only other building in the compound was to be a cowshed so that he could watch the cows from his verandah. Later he formed a Cow Protection Society, which raised the cow from a commercial product into a member of the family.

Gandhi's solicitude for the sacred cow was now shared by the Indian Government. An official decree banned the slaughter of cows, and laid down rules for the care of cattle which had suffered from neglect. Plans had been made for catching and taming wild cattle, which like other sacred consumers, such as monkeys and peacocks, ate into the limited food-supplies of famine-threatened areas, and caused havoc in many villages.

The cows roaming the congested streets of Calcutta were neither wild nor neglected. Like the goats which also strolled at their leisure in front of trams and cars; they mingled amicably with the pavement population. I noticed three, two white and one brown, sitting placidly before a chemist's shop in a main street, their front legs tucked under them as though they intended to remain there till the Day of Judgment. No one ever told me how these cows were fed or where they spent the night. Nor did anyone fully explain how Gandhi came to mean so much to this vast unlettered segment of humanity, moving from one humble job to another like the animals on which it depended.

By the time that the bus deposited its load of passengers in Upper Wood Street, midday was long past. I was obliged, as I had expected, to abandon the proposed expedition, for I had promised a recent acquaintance, Mrs. Sujata Ray, to spend the afternoon in visiting her village run by Bratichari workers outside Calcutta. She drove me there with an American social worker, Grace Rhoads of the Society of Friends.

The Bratichari movement had originated twenty years earlier in the researches made by Mr. Gurusaday Dutt into the folk-dances and songs of Bengal. To the preservation of these songs and dances as part of India's indigenous culture, Mr. Dutt had

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added a spiritual basis by introducing five "Bratas" or ideals of life—Knowledge, Labour, Truth, Unity and Joy.

This experimental village was the first of India's 750,000 villages that I saw; I was to visit others less exceptional than Sujata Ray's community of clean huts and smooth lawns beside a green pool on the edge of a rice field. The brown half-naked children danced and sang for us, showing us the pots they had moulded, the pictures they had drawn, the cloth they had woven, and a relief-map of India that they had made out of mud. Here, at any rate, we seemed to be far removed from the grim prophecies of the High Commissioner. As we raced back to Calcutta for a tea-party, I carried away a picture of slim brown bodies dancing beside the olive-green water.

The tea-party was given by Mrs. Charulata Mukherjee, President of the All-India Women's Conference which had first invited me to India nearly a decade ago. At first my hostess, a tall elderly woman in a white saree, seemed austere and unapproachable; she was the mother, I learned, of Mrs. Renuka Ray, a Member of India's Legislative Assembly. Eventually the party identified me as their would-be British delegate whose attempts to join them had been twice frustrated, and for an hour we talked, over cups of tea and marzipan sweetmeats, about the work of the Women's Conference and the war-time ban on my movements. When I left I promised, on my return to Calcutta, to visit the refugee centre run by the Conference in the northern quarter of the city.

The next day we were due to depart for Santiniketan. I had arranged to pack my heavy luggage and leave it that morning at the Varma's apartment; the discovery that a collection of books and pamphlets already presented to me would not fit in anywhere sent me hurrying to the market behind the hotel to buy a straw carrier.

This was by no means the simple undertaking that it would be in England. I had hardly put my European face into the precincts of the market when a contingent of youthful would-be couriers surrounded me, and a chorus of enthusiastic vendors acclaimed my presence. One small boy, equipped with an immense basket which he evidently hoped would contain a morning's shopping and provide him with a substantial commission, firmly attached himself to me and would not be shaken off.

### *Former Capital*

"I only want a straw carrier," I explained desperately, but this statement did little to dispel the evident hope of landing a European millionaire. When I finally convinced my pursuer that my mission was as modest as I had said, he accepted his disappointment with undiminished politeness. After I had rejected the American tin-trunks and British calf-leather suitcases which were offered me by the score, he carried the humble straw container back to the hotel as impressively as if it had been a jewelled casket.

Even now my problems, as a solitary stranger, were not yet over. A taxi-driver conveyed me and my luggage as far as the courtyard in Russa Road outside the Varma's apartment, but the heavy bags had still to be carried upstairs. No porter or coolie appeared to be available; the taxi-driver was reluctant to leave his taxi and I felt equally unwilling to lose sight of my portable suitcases. A cavalcade of small children appeared from the block of flats; heads looked over verandahs, and a low buzz of excited though unintelligible conversation broke out.

I was beginning to wonder whether I should be there all morning when the taxi-driver spied a rickshaw boy in the distance and summoned him with a long whistle. The slender boy hoisted the cumbersome bedroll on to his head, balanced the largest suitcase skilfully on the top of it, and ran as fast as a young antelope to the second-floor flat.

With relief I discovered that the Varma's were in; eventually all the luggage that I wanted to leave was successfully parked on their verandah. After lunch they drove me to the Howrah Station to join my fellow-delegates in the special coach reserved to Bolpur, the junction for Santiniketan. On our way through the Maidan we passed the white marble Victoria Memorial, set down on the greensward like an expensive bridal cake at an open-air wedding. It seemed to be a monument less to the former Queen than to the once-prosperous England which had spent a disproportionate amount of her imperial revenue on architectural display.

"Are you going to let that white elephant remain there?" I inquired.

"Why not?" said K. C. Varma, his reply less passionate than my question. "It would be a pity to destroy it; we shall find a use for it."

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He drove on through the business area of Calcutta, between banks and commercial buildings which recalled New York's Wall Street. As the car crossed the Howrah Bridge, I looked down at the barges, loaded with tea, jute and pig-iron, which almost linked the opposite banks of the Hooghly River. The bridge itself, a single span across the water, was the third largest cantilever bridge in the world, said my host. It was even wider than the George Washington Bridge in New York, and had been built mainly from steel supplied by the Tata firm. Down the centre ran a double track for trams passing to and fro from Howrah ; on either side a wide road for traffic was bounded by a narrow foot-path.

The trains of the East Indian and Bengal-Nagpur Railways left from Howrah Station. We struggled towards the Bolpur coach along a densely-packed platform ; an incessant shrill sound, half singing and half shouting, beat against my ears as I boarded the train.

" It's the new kind of second-class compartment," remarked my companion, observing with interest the wide flat seats, upholstered in stiff dark-green leather, which faced each other like seats in a tram.

Thirty or forty travellers from various countries already sat there ; the men greatly outnumbered the women. In anticipation of a trip to the country, the majority had gone sartorially *al fresco* ; I had seldom seen so large a selection of open-necked shirts, khaki shorts, and rope-soled sandals. The small Chinese delegation, a soberly garbed, middle-aged brother and sister with impassive faces, alone suggested that we were a dignified group pursuing a civilised end.

As the train began to move and I waved a temporary farewell to the Varma, I wondered, not for the first time, why liberal opinions should so often be accompanied by this peculiar variety of fancy dress.

## V—THE HOME OF TAGORE

“ I have almost a feeling of a hope realised and a vision fulfilled. Thirty years ago the founder of this institution envisaged Santiniketan as a meeting-place for kindred souls coming from all over the world. ‘ Let us have at least one little spot in India,’ he said in a letter written as far back as 1920, ‘ which will break down false geographical barriers, a place where the whole world will find its home. Let that place be our Santiniketan. For us there will be only one country and that will comprise the whole world. We shall know of only one nation, and that will comprise the whole human race.’ ”

Rathindranath Tagore (the son of the poet).

**Y**EARS OF TRAVEL in many countries have never impaired the feeling of wonder and curiosity which a new scene brings to me. The four-hour journey from Calcutta to Bolpur, a commonplace trip in Indian eyes, made rural India real for the first time.

Like a child going on holiday, I knelt upon the wide leather seat and looked through the open window at animals and plants hitherto unfamiliar. This was not a wild area—its many small stations gave the stretch of railway a suburban atmosphere—but pampas grass grew in the semi-cultivated fields, where the half-reaped acres of rice recalled oats at harvest time. Apart from the silhouetted palms and a damp green lushness which is usually tropical, we might have been passing through an agricultural section of the United States.

But American pools would not have had wide-open lotus flowers floating on their surface, or the brown bodies of large animals plunging beneath the thick covering of watery leaves. Having only a vague knowledge of Indian natural history, I imagined that I was seeing crocodiles or even hippopotami. It was an anti-climax to learn that the aquatic creatures were merely water-buffaloes, those semi-domesticated auxiliaries of Indian agriculture for which Gandhi had been anxious to substitute a well-planned breed of cattle.

Fortified by sweetened cups of tea at a junction, we reached

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Bolpur after dark. On the platform a reception committee awaited us, accompanied by enthusiastic boy students from Santiniketan who had volunteered to handle our luggage. The white-robed figures beneath hurricane lanterns and the dusky faces peering out of the night renewed my sense of taking part in some oriental pageant. Communal buses transported us to Santiniketan through Bolpur village, where small shops, still open, displayed their wares by lamplight.

Walking in darkness through soft sand and short prickly grass, we followed our guides to a temporary gateway which daylight was to reveal as lavishly decorated with flags and streamers. Beyond it, with the effect of a back-cloth on a dimly-lighted stage, stretched an amorphous camp of shadowy tents merging into the night. The impression faded as I stepped into a lighted marquee, where a little bald-headed, bearded figure in brown and white seemed to emerge out of the ground like a benevolent genie from the *Arabian Nights*. I was soon to know him as Gurdial Mallik, a Gandhian poet and story-teller and the humorist of the Conference.

"Welcome to Santiniketan!" he cried, waving bare wizard-like arms. "Tell me your names! Here are your instructions!"

Printed slips of paper were handed out; I read mine in comparative quiet after the new arrivals had dispersed to their different quarters.

"Friends, we welcome you with all our hearts. We are profoundly grateful that so many of you from so many lands have come together. There can be no nobler cause than the one that has brought us together. Let us make the coming few days fruitful in the cause of World Peace . . ."

From these elevated heights the document descended to some practical instructions and warnings. Santiniketan, it reminded its readers, was "a simple and out of the way place" where they would not find modern conveniences. They were therefore requested "Kindly to bear in mind the following points," which confronted the European visitors with some minor problems of Eastern civilisation.

"Drink only the boiled water kept in the small pots in the tents."

"Water-buckets are placed near the taps outside the tents and these should be returned to their places after use."



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"A barber and cobbler (sic.) will be available between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m."

"The cots in the tents are village-made so not very strong—therefore please use with care."

"There are latrines in European and Indian style. The commodes in the tents are only for emergency use."

We learned that the latrines, which had to be dug to a great depth, demanded more planning than the Agenda. These feats of local engineering were reserved for the men living in tents; the women, being only eighteen in number, stayed in the Santiniketan guest-houses. Agatha Harrison and I, with women delegates from the United States, Belgium and India, occupied the Tata House at the lower end of the dusty path which led downhill through the camp from the gateway of the Tagores' private dwelling.

In my room two light beds, made of rope and bamboo, stood on the bare stone floor beneath large unglazed windows looking on to the campus across a covered verandah. Two buckets filled with cold water furnished the wash-house at the back, which also possessed the unusual luxury of a non-flush toilet cleared daily by the volunteer scavengers. I had not returned, as I had expected, to the tents and camps of the First World War, but to the well-and-bucket civilisation of John Bunyan.

"Why didn't someone tell me there was no toilet-paper in India?" I wondered. "How complicated is the simple life!—no taps to wash clothes, no plugs in the basins, a perpetual chase after boiled water, and the obligation to padlock one's bedroom door however hurried one may be!"

A legend, which I was never able to confirm, associated my room with C. F. Andrews, who had spent long periods at Santiniketan as the friend and disciple of Rabindranath Tagore. Andrews had been present when W. B. Yeats read Tagore's poems at Sir William Rothenstein's house in Hampstead. Their friendship matured quickly after that first meeting, deepening Andrews's understanding of the poet's background, and inspiring him to foretell, in a letter written to Tagore on 20th December, 1912, the coming of a free India.

"My thoughts," he wrote, "turn more and more to an India that shall be really independent. And yet one knows that this can hardly be at present. Only how to get out of this vicious

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circle of subjection leading to demoralisation (both of rulers and ruled) and demoralisation leading to further subjection."

A summer spent in Santiniketan convinced C. F. Andrews that he had a call to interpret Indian thought to the West, and Christian thought to the East. Eventually he became a "heretic" who regarded Christianity as not only oriental but probably Indian in origin. He finally settled at Santiniketan in April, 1914, after a seven weeks' visit to South Africa in support of Gandhi's campaign for the oppressed Indian community.

Andrews, a natural St. Francis, possessed certain idiosyncrasies not uncommon amongst saints, which are also attributed to his spiritual successor, the Reverend Michael Scott. Wherever he went he shed studs and buttons, lost other people's possessions with benign penitence, and dumped his laundry, when he remembered to dump it at all, at addresses in various parts of India. Throughout his seventy years he was consumed by a passionate pity for the underprivileged and dispossessed; Sri Krishna's description of the blessed yogi in the *Gita* might have been his epitaph:

Who burns with the bliss  
And suffers the sorrow  
Of every creature  
Within his own heart,  
Making his own  
Each bliss and each sorrow :  
Him I hold highest  
Of all the yogis."

The reverence for beauty expressed in Andrews's rare poems rivalled his compassion, and explained the deep satisfaction that he found in Tagore's personality. Tagore acted as his guide and counsellor in many doubts and perplexities. Andrews's biographers recall that his devotion to the poet, in the months of mental anguish which followed the outbreak of the First World War, developed into a painful anxiety for Tagore's life and health. Rabindranath accepted these exaggerated emotions with patient wisdom. This psychological dependence seems to have continued throughout Andrews's life, making their friends grateful for the fact that Tagore, though ten years the senior, survived Andrews by fifteen months.

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Counsel and service were not all on one side. It was Andrews—named “Christ’s Faithful Apostle” by Gurdial Mallik on the strength of his initials—who endeavoured to resolve the tension which occasionally developed between Tagore and Gandhi. Had poet and prophet been smaller men, that tension might have created disastrous conflict and even have wrecked the movement for India’s freedom.

In an essay on Tagore and Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru has compared “the aristocratic artist, turned democrat with proletarian sympathies,” and the Mahatma, “more a man of the people, almost the embodiment of the Indian peasant,” who represented India’s ancient tradition of asceticism and renunciation. The appearance within one generation of these two Titans gives Nehru confidence in “the deep vitality of India.” Their lives fill him with hope; how can such an India perish?

Tagore, born to a Brahmin family of Calcutta zemindars, both symbolised and led the Bengal Renaissance in literature and religion which coincided with his life, while Gandhi came from a middle-class Vaisya household in a minor State of Kathiawad. According to Krishna Kripalani, editor of the political weekly *Vigil* and another essayist in the Gandhi Memorial Number of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, both men sought God through love, but the one perceived him in Beauty, and the other in Truth. Though Tagore understood the purifying force of suffering, he perceived that men need also to experience joy. His own life was simple and even austere, but as a poet he realised the part that the senses must play in a balanced human existence.

When Gandhi began his non-violent, non-cooperative campaign in 1921, Tagore disliked the negative quality of the word “non-cooperation.” In one of the books that C. F. Andrews edited, *Mahatma Gandhi’s Ideas*, he recorded Tagore’s belief that the masses following Gandhi shared a mood of wild excitement rather than a deep moral conviction. “As he expressed it in a remarkable phrase, it shouted to him, it did not sing.” Tagore took no part in the Khaddar agitation for wearing only homespun cloth; he regarded it merely as a supplementary method of helping the destitute, while for Gandhi it was the answer to India’s poverty.

Tagore was also conscious that few of the reforms associated with Gandhi’s name were initiated by him; most of them had

been proposed by his predecessors or contemporaries. The poet himself had constantly emphasised the need for a constructive programme of rural education ; he had also insisted upon the value of handicrafts in training children, the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity, and the " absolute necessity " of eliminating from Hinduism the nightmare of untouchability.

It remained true, as Tagore wrote with characteristic generosity, that these ideas never had the same " energising power " as they acquired after Gandhi adopted them. " Perhaps," added Tagore, " he will not succeed. Perhaps he will fail as the Buddha failed and as Christ failed to wean men from their iniquities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come."

When Tagore issued his warnings against a narrow emotional nationalism, Gandhi called him " The Great Sentinel "—an appreciative if inappropriate description ; " the Great Originator " would have been more exact. But Gandhi, unlike his fellow-rebel Nehru, turned a blind eye towards the part which poetry can play in a revolution. In paying tribute to Sarojini Naidu, the " Nightingale of India " who ended her life as Governor of the United Provinces, Nehru praised the artistic quality that her poetic mind had given to politics. For Gandhi this particular synthesis appeared to be impossible.

" The hungry millions," he announced bluntly, " ask for one poem, invigorating food."

Savonarola-like, he organised a bonfire of foreign cloth. C. F. Andrews, picturing India's underclad masses, protested vigorously against this holocaust of beautiful fabrics. Like Tagore he felt a deep concern for the literary and artistic work at Santiniketan which he realised that Gandhi's single-track mind was unable to share. He admired the Mahatma's intensity of purpose, but in his eyes that ruthlessness came near to war itself, and civil disobedience trod on the brink of violence.

In 1936, when C. F. Andrews was on his way to England, he stopped at Sevagram to say good-bye to Gandhi, and took with him Tagore's *Collected Poems and Plays* as a parting gift. In spite of his long association with Tagore, Gandhi was unfamiliar with his poems. Andrews insisted that he read then and there " The Cycle of Spring," a favourite of his own for two decades. His determined search for roads to reconciliation between the

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two Indian leaders caused Tagore's eldest brother Dwijendranath to call him "the Hyphen."

The stature of all three men was shown in the triumph of mutual respect over these personal differences. They were united by their shared concern for the poverty-stricken and oppressed, of whom Tagore wrote :

" I am thankful that my lot lies with the  
humble who suffer and bear the burden of power,  
and hide their faces and stifle their sobs in the dark."

In spite of this passionate pity, he confessed to his God that he could not identify himself with the sufferers in the same way as Gandhi.

" When I try to bow down to Thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where Thy feet rest among the poorest, the loneliest and the lost."

In one of his dramas, *Prayascitta* (Atonement), Tagore had foretold the coming of Gandhi; a leading character, Dhananjaya, typified the power of non-violence, and spoke of *ahimsa* in words similar to Gandhi's teaching. When the play was produced at Santiniketan in 1910, Tagore took this part himself.

As time passed, the tension between poet and prophet diminished and finally disappeared. Before beginning his long fast of protest against the " Communal Award " in September, 1932, Gandhi wrote to Tagore, and Tagore went to his bedside in the Yeravada Prison at Poona. They met for the last time at Santiniketan in 1940. There, in spite of his advanced age and failing health, Tagore garlanded Gandhi with his own hands, and presented him with a short address of welcome.

For several years Gandhi had helped to raise funds for Santiniketan. When he paid his last visit in 1945, he referred to his long relationship with the dead poet, and to the final triumph of mutual understanding.

" I started with a disposition to detect a conflict between Gurudev (Tagore) and myself, but ended with the glorious discovery that there was none."

Lying alone that night in the darkness, for my Belgian roommate had not yet arrived, I meditated for a long time on those

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personalities once so dominant at Santiniketan, and their survival in the institutions that they had founded.

Agatha Harrison had warned me to close my door, lest one of the pariah dogs which yelped and quarrelled on the outskirts of the camp should come in. But my interest in the unexplored landscape was greater than my fear of the dogs. After the lights had been put out at the customary hour of eleven, I gazed through the open door at the shadows cast by the distant tents across the dry grass. The moon was almost full ; beneath its brilliance the camp resembled a wood-cut in sharp blacks and whites.

At dawn I was awakened by the soft singing of the girl students marching round the compound in bordered sarees with coloured cords plaited into their hair. The hour was only 4 a.m., but I was due to rise at 6.15 in order to attend the short memorial service held for Tagore every Wednesday morning in the *mandir*, or hall of worship. Rabindranath's father Devendranath, known as the Maharsi (" great saint "), had built this small temple outside the gates of the family mansion, Uttarayan.

The worship here followed the Brahmo-Samaj variety of Hinduism which Rabindranath and his father adopted. Brahmo-Samaj, a nineteenth-century puritan movement, had been directed against former Hindu idolatry and the unthinking tolerance from which it sprang. Like the English Puritanism of the seventeenth century, it sought to eliminate the ritualistic practices and " abominable idols " which came between the worshipper and his God.

Through the cool clear morning I walked up the sloping rust-red path which led past the tents to the temple. Under its glass dome decorated by intermittent panes of crimson, purple and green, the *mandir* bore a family resemblance to the coloured glass conservatories which adjoin Victorian drawing-rooms. Outside the gates a group of students and guests had already gathered. I learned from them that in India shoes have to be removed before a visitor enters a ceremonial building. Though they are sometimes abandoned for hours, these shoes are seldom stolen.

When the ceremony began, some of the worshippers knelt outside on the steps ; others went within and sat on the white marble floor. The inside of the temple was very simple ; no imagery or symbolism had been introduced apart from white

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flowers brought by the Santiniketan children. A number of students, one a beautiful girl, sang music written by Tagore for his own words. A deep plaintive yearning permeated this music, which seemed to enshrine the very soul of prayer.

As I walked downhill to the marquee behind the reception tent, I had a clear view of the level red landscape, dotted with palms and pampas grass, which stretched to the distant horizon. A wide track, several inches deep in dust, crossed the path through the camp ; bullock carts and their drivers, going from village to village, linked immemorial India with the visitors to Santiniketan. The thick dust seeped into shoes and sandals, compelling women delegates to discard their stockings.

Breakfast was laid on trestle tables beneath a coloured awning ; the food, provided by a firm of caterers, proved to be unexpectedly good. Tea, coffee, and eggs were plentiful ; to the English guests the plates of oranges and plantains, known to India as " the poor man's fruit," were luxuries suited to a West-End hotel. The contractor had not yet completed his job ; fruit might be plentiful, but knives, forks and spoons were still to come. The Western delegates, involuntarily imitating their Indian hosts, had to learn how to eat with their fingers.

When I left the tent for the Tata House a group of small boys planted themselves in front of me, holding out albums with coloured pages.

" Your autograph, please ! " they demanded in chorus.

The boys varied in age from four to twelve, but even the youngest seemed to be equipped with expensive fountain pens. Describing the " squandermania " which seized India in the first exuberance of freedom, Dorothy Jane Ward refers in her book to a two-million dollar shipment of American fountain pens. Some of these had evidently reached Santiniketan, bringing with them the American passion for autograph-hunting. It was to prove a greater inconvenience than the anticipated snakes and mosquitoes ; the hunters, complete with pens, descended like clouds of locusts upon camps, railway stations, and public meetings.

I was making my bed with the sheets and blankets from my bedroll, when a soft voice addressed me from the verandah.

" I would like to show you everything. Can you come with me now, before it is too hot ? "

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The voice belonged to a sixteen-year-old girl student in a white saree. As the Conference did not open till the next day and most of the delegates had still to arrive, she and her younger companion took me on a conscientious two-hours' tour round Tagore's university. Their voices were quiet and their manners deferential as they discoursed informatively on the School, the Art College, the Science Room, the Cheena-Bhavana for Chinese and Tibetan studies, and the various hostels where the teachers and students lived and worked.

At the Art School, Kala-Bhavana, I met Nandalal Bose, one of India's greatest artists who supervised the students' studies. A grave, reticent man of indeterminate age, he allowed the numerous drawings and paintings by himself which hung on the walls to tell the story of his work. Through the Bengal School of modern painting, he and Abanindranath Tagore had helped to rescue Indian art, born between 200 B.C. and 650 A.D. in the Ajanta caves in Hyderabad State, from its long decline after the Moghul period. The two artists had done as much to adorn the Bengal Renaissance as Rabindranath himself.

Visva-Bharati, the international university where the poet had sought to integrate the cultures of East and West, became the centre of that Renaissance. By his own writings he had already created a literature from the short, crisp Bengali language, much as thirteenth-century Dante and twentieth-century Hu Shih made literatures from the vernacular speech of Italy and China. But Tagore could not be satisfied with contributing to the legacy of his generation through literature alone. In an address at Santiniketan during the celebrations for his eightieth birthday in April, 1941, he put into words the problem of the writer dominated by a social conscience.

"There came a time when perforce I had to snatch myself away from the mere appreciation of literature and contemplation of the great world of civilisation. As I emerged into the stark light of bare facts, the sight of the dire poverty of the Indian masses rent my heart. Rudely shaken out of my dreams, I began to realise that perhaps in no other modern state was there such hopeless dearth of the most elementary needs of existence."

The poet of whom W. B. Yeats wrote, in his Introduction to the English edition of *Gitanjali*, "All the aspirations of mankind are in his hymns," was not content for those aspirations to re-



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main there ; he wanted also to give them practical effect. " The East," he added, " for its own sake and for the sake of the world, must not remain unrevealed. The deepest source of all calamity in history is misunderstanding. For where we do not understand, we can never be just."

Earlier in the century it had seemed to Tagore that there was not one Indian university in which a student could become acquainted with the best productions of the Indian mind ; the influences which dominated academic studies were classical or European. Inspired by the belief that justice and understanding were the same and between them could establish peace, he created the nucleus of an international university in which the East would " collect its own scattered lamps and offer them to the enlightenment of the world."

In 1863, when Rabindranath was two years old, his father the Maharsi had bought some land two miles from Bolpur village in West Bengal, a hundred miles north of Calcutta. Here he built a retreat, or " ashram," for quiet and prayer, close to the tiny River Kopai which Rabindranath was to acclaim years later in one of the many poems that revealed his love for the open countryside.

Devendranath Tagore called his ashram " Santiniketan," or " Abode of Peace." Each morning he was accustomed to meditate under two trees which overlooked the level plain. Later a memorial stone marked the place, with an inscription representing the Maharsi's conception of God :

" HE IS  
the Repose of my life,  
the Joy of my mind,  
the Peace of my spirit."

In 1901, Rabindranath founded a school for boys at this ashram, and moved there with his family. His teachers and pupils were expected to observe only three regulations ; they should use no idol or image of God in their worship, speak no evil of others' religious beliefs, and do no injury to animal or bird. Otherwise, remembering his own restricted childhood in a city home, he gave the boys complete freedom to explore, experiment, and express themselves through some chosen form of skill.

Beneath the full-grown trees which now surrounded the

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family home Uttarayan, the school developed as a place of poetry, music, and dancing. Gradually Tagore gathered round him a group of sympathetic young teachers who lived as brothers with their pupils, and allowed no false distinctions to grow up between work and play. By 1921 the ashram was ready for the opening of Visva-Bharati as an international university, in which the cultures of East and West would unite in a common fellowship, and girl students work beside the boys. Its foundation-stone had been laid in 1918, inscribed with the motto *Yatra visvam bhavati ekanidam*—"Where the whole world meets in one place." Eighteen years later, the choice of Santiniketan for the first part of a world conference fulfilled this prophecy.

The studies at Visva-Bharati began with India, and her achievements in art, music, literature, religion, and social institutions. From India they extended to the Asiatic civilisations of Persia, Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Tibet, China and Japan. Finally came the world-studies, which included the cultures of Europe and America. Even after the setback at Amritsar, Tagore believed that the British, like other conquerors, could contribute valuably to Indian civilisation.

During the last twenty years of his life, Tagore travelled all over the world raising funds by lectures for his university. In 1936, when he was seventy-five, he toured India with a company of Santiniketan actors and musicians to increase the income of Visva-Bharati. At Delhi he met Gandhi, who persuaded an anonymous friend to give 60,000 rupees so that the ageing poet could go home and rest.

Even his university did not set a limit to Tagore's concern. Early in life, when he took charge of the family estates, he had become convinced that the redemption of India must begin with the villages in which nine-tenths of her population lived. In 1913 he bought a large house on the edge of Surul, a village near Santiniketan, which became a centre for rural studies with the new name of Sriniketan, "home of welfare and beauty."

Our free day before the Conference made possible a visit to this rural institute, Silpa-Bhavana, where apprentices were trained in weaving, dyeing, printing, pottery, carpentry, leather work, and book-binding. Many primitive looms, worked by both hands and feet, were in use at Sriniketan; such looms produce a quarter of the cloth made by India for herself. The

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model village was employed not only in handicrafts ; its workers attempted to apply science to agriculture, and to conserve the dry soil by experiments in anti-erosion and afforestation. They had also founded co-operative Health Societies in an endeavour to fight malaria, which affected millions of Indians every year, and had become a greater scourge than the now controlled diseases of smallpox, plague, and cholera.

We returned from Sriniketan to find tea set out and visitors steadily arriving. From Calcutta had now come Horace Alexander, the tall inscrutable Quaker in whose constructive mind the idea of the Conference had originated. Agatha Harrison introduced me to Rathindranath Tagore, the son of the poet, a handsome white-haired man in his sixties, with the same impressive profile as his father. He had invited me to luncheon with his family before I left the tea-table for an address to the Santiniketan students.

The students themselves had suggested the subject, " How I came to the way of Gandhiji." At the door of a room in the Cheena-Bhavana, the School of Chinese studies directed by Professor Tan Yun-Shan, they garlanded me with white and yellow flowers, and put a ceremonial mark on my forehead. In the audience I noticed several foreign visitors ; Yrjo Kallinen sat with Dietrich Lund, the Norwegian who had supervised post-war reconstruction in the devastated northern province of Finnmark. To the rows of boys and girls on the floor in front of me, I described the experiences which had led me to accept the Gandhian ideal of non-violence.

During the discussion that followed, a boy student put a pertinent question :

" How is it," he asked, " that England, which professes to be a Christian country, treats the Sermon on the Mount as a dead letter ? "

I told him that he must distinguish between official Christianity and the faith of the individual Christian. The leaders of a State Church were liable, especially in war-time, to render to Caesar the things which were God's. But the individual Christian had often been ready, like many Indians, to face prison and death rather than repudiate the standards laid down by the Sermon on the Mount and in Gandhi's teaching.

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That evening found the gathering of delegates almost complete. At supper I met the two men with whom a chance selection of the same itineraries was to send me all over India.

George Paine, an Episcopal clergyman from the United States, had been my host at a dinner in Boston four years earlier. Very tall, very thin, white-haired and pale-faced but as tough as a telegraph pole, George was the youngest seventy-five that I had ever met. It was he who knew which temples, mosques, museums and palaces ought to be visited wherever we stayed ; he whose brisk "Come on ! Let's get started !" continually summoned A. C. Barrington and myself from a tendency to sit and argue instead of sight-seeing.

A. C. Barrington, more than thirty years George Paine's junior, looked a typical farmer from "down under." A powerful man with red cheeks and wiry hair, almost as tall as George and twice as broad, he had been an organiser of Adult Education in New Zealand until he experienced the "conversion" which impelled him to found the Riverside Community at Lower Moutere in the South Island as a road to the good life. Genial, loquacious and incapable of formality, he strode through the camp addressing his fellow-delegates in the hearty Antipodean accent which resembles London Cockney, and urging them all to call him "Barry." He could be guaranteed to shoulder physical burdens such as trunks and bed-rolls with unobtrusive good nature, and to drop verbal bricks with a psychological crash into tense situations.

At the supper-table a crescendo of conversation rose from the seventy-five men and eighteen women who between them represented five continents and thirty-four countries. The Europeans, still clumsily eating with their fingers, envied the dexterity of the twenty-eight Indians. Ages ranged from the early twenties to the middle seventies ; arts, professions, agriculture and commerce contributed their quota ; Christianity, Hinduism, Mohammedanism and Buddhism each produced its disciples. Since most visitors and all the Indians spoke a variant of English, this language was used for the Conference.

One or two large areas remained unrepresented. No delegates came from the Soviet territories, though Heinz Kraschutski of Eastern Germany had travelled from their fringe. The sole guest invited from Latin America never arrived ; the Mediter-

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ranean countries sent delegates only from France, Egypt, and the Lebanon. Ostentatiously absent were representatives of East and West Pakistan.

The strange gathering nevertheless reflected the vast diversity of mankind, and illustrated its power to find unity in a simple, compelling idea. Outside India, which alone gave publicity to the meeting in national newspapers, its members were either ignored or regarded as fanatics. Persons who come to uncomfortable conclusions through thinking are usually looked upon as idiots by non-thinkers. Eminent statesmen dismissed Mahatma Gandhi as a half-crazy fakir until, to the astonishment of "realists" everywhere, his methods succeeded. Those who follow him will doubtless be similarly discredited until their policy is found to work; the rest of the world will then maintain that it agreed with them all along.

That evening Horace Alexander announced the appointment of several committees. Since ordinary reporters were to be excluded from the Conference, he asked me to join the Publicity Committee which would supply material to the Indian Press. The preliminary headlines already used by leading Indian newspapers to describe the preparations at Santiniketan had astonished the British visitors, who were accustomed to see great political events squeezed into small paragraphs on inside pages by sport, murders, films, and Gussy Moran's frilly pants. Since press-reporting involves some command of the language used, the convener of the Committee was another English writer, Reginald Reynolds, a Quaker follower of Gandhi from his early youth, and the author of books on perverse topics such as Beards and Latrines.

Several other delegates were invited to become temporary journalists, but only three, Jerome Sauerwein, Lucy Kingston of the Irish Republic, and Marjorie Sykes, part-author of the biography of C. F. Andrews, proved to be of substantial value. The rest never seriously accepted the idea that, if copy for the Press must be handed in at six o'clock, those who are supposed to be providing it cannot go off to a fascinating tea-party at four.

For days on end Reginald Reynolds and I reverted to the position of cub-reporters, scribbling down the ever-lengthening speeches of orators unable to resist the temptation of haranguing a world conference. Whatever impulse might have assailed us, we were quite unable to do much haranguing ourselves. As functions

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piled up, incidents multiplied, and eloquence increased, we became journalistic machines whose opportunities of making friends or exploring the countryside progressively diminished.

It is, however, improbable that the Conference suffered from the compulsory inability of two delegates to join its oratorical contests.

## VI—WISDOM LINGERS

“ I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest despite all barriers to win back his lost human heritage.”

Rabindranath Tagore, August, 1941 (his last utterance).

IN THE MANGO grove at Uttarayan, a canopy patterned in gold, black and vermillion sheltered a semi-circular platform from the sun. The date was 1st December, a fact which the Western visitors assembled for the formal opening of the Conference found difficult to believe.

Beneath the thick leaves of the mangoes stretched rows of chairs, occupied by girls with ribbon-tied hair, youths in white robes, and schoolchildren dressed in bright colours. For the moment these Santiniketan students were taking a holiday from their voluntary duties as waiters, scavengers, messengers, and guides on conducted tours. Through the trees appeared the Tagores' house, which wore an air of expectancy like a ship about to sail.

Ceremonial music, shrill and plaintive, sounded as the speakers walked to their chairs over the red, blue and yellow rugs which adorned the floor of the dais. India's Minister of Health, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, presided instead of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, a sufferer from asthma. The Governor of West Bengal, Dr. K. N. Katju, appeared in a white Gandhi cap with a dark grey coat over white breeches and stockings. He and Rathindranath Tagore, golden-robed, and garlanded like the Governor with white and yellow flowers, uttered their formal words of welcome. Through the serene air of the garden, the summoning words of Pandit Kshotimolan Sen's *Invocation to Peace* echoed with devout optimism.

“ Let peace reign over the earth and sky ! Let it spread in the water, in the fields and forests ! Let the divine powers in the universe be for our peace ! Let me, with the peace which is for

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all, transform whatever is terrible and cruel into the serene and the good ! Let peace come to us through the all ! ”

Far away from the songs and speeches, another group of Eastern people viewed this idealistic ceremony with jaundiced eyes. The support of the Conference by Indian politicians suggested to the anxious Government and officials of Pakistan that a hypocritical pantomime had been arranged which probably concealed some obscure threat to themselves.

The still unsettled dispute over the possession of Kashmir was steadily driving the two countries nearer to war. Separation, artificially prolonged, fostered the growth of insane suspicions on both sides of the turbulent frontier. Towards the end of January, when my travels concluded with a week in Karachi, my resourcefulness was to be taxed to its limits by the attempt to prove that the Santiniketan and Sevagram meetings had been exactly what they appeared—honest if bewildered endeavours to confront the obstacles that lay between world peace and its realisation.

During that week I learned that an article had appeared in *Dawn*, the organ of the Muslim League, which gave an unflattering picture of our well-intentioned efforts. At my request, one of the officials in charge of my Pakistan programme produced a copy. I had reason, I perceived, to be grateful for his confidence that I was neither an amiable fool nor a vicious hypocrite, for the article, entitled “Santiniketan Farce,” was not merely sceptical but vituperative. I could hardly have found a more convincing example of the bitterness with which the Press on both sides exacerbated the Indo-Pakistan conflict.

“We wonder,” ran the concluding paragraph, “why not one of the 83 ‘leading pacifists’ dared to put a straight question to India who while brandishing a sword still dripping with the blood of thousands of Kashmiris was preaching non-violence and pacifism to the rest of the world. The Santiniketan farce would have been complete in all respects if it had also been presided over by Mr. Patel, instead of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.”

In the Karachi hotel, I asked my official sponsor what he thought of the article. “Do you really believe all those accusations ? ” I inquired.

He answered me candidly.

“I think there is something to be said for them. It is no use preaching if you do not practice.”



## *Wisdom Lingers*

*"But all countries preach. One can only struggle to bridge the gap between their professions and their behaviour. That really was all we were trying to do in India—to carry Gandhi's work to the rest of the world."*

The article had at least displayed, if only by implication, some respect for Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who presided at Santiniketan for the first three days. For two years this Indian Princess, whose name "Amrit" meant "nectar," had been the hope of the Hindu refugees from Pakistan. To the responsibility for India's health she had added the task of finding them food, clothing and shelter.

Sixteen years earlier, Rajkumari had come to Britain to put the demands of the All-India Women's Conference before the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee which was then considering the India Bill. The Indian women asked only for three concessions. They wanted the right to vote as citizens and not merely as the wives of qualified men; they asked that seats in the Legislative Assembly should not be reserved on a communal basis; they requested that no seats should be kept for women, who wished to take an equal chance with their male colleagues.

Not one of these recommendations was accepted. India paid in blood for the Committee's refusal to recognise the wisdom of the women who made them. In her evidence Rajkumari had warned its members that if a communal basis was used for the elections, "the poison of communalism will enter our ranks." The future was to see that prophecy fulfilled.

In 1945, when I first met Rajkumari in London, war and prison still compassed her with their shadows. Political conflict had been deepened by war-time separation; she spoke with sorrow of the "oceans of misunderstanding" between India and Britain. A year later, after a visit to India which coincided with the Cabinet Mission, Agatha Harrison spoke gravely of the highly-charged atmosphere in New Delhi.

Those "oceans of misunderstanding" had now dried up; that highly-charged atmosphere had changed, and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur had changed with it. Like every intelligent idealist she had found the power to bring good out of evil a cathartic experience, though the evil might be great, and the remedy that even a Minister could bring very small in proportion to the need. England was now a friend, and the past forgiven if not forgotten.

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Such anger as she retained was directed, like all India's anger at that moment of communal bitterness, against Pakistan. But it effervesced only occasionally, and at the appropriate time it could be, and was, subdued.

As she presided over the opening sessions in a crisp white saree, her quiet presence and gentle voice were themselves a challenge to heat and hatred. She pleased the peace-minded delegates by dispensing with the military guard provided for Cabinet Ministers, and later reminded the Hindu contingent that Gandhi had died for Hindu-Muslim unity.

"If we can stretch out the hand of friendship," she added, "to the millions of Muslims still in our midst in India, we may convince Pakistan that we have no enmity in our hearts and thus bring back love and confidence."

In Delhi I learned that Rajkumari, like C. F. Andrews, also played the part of a hyphen. It was she who linked the sensitive, imaginative Nehru and his tough Deputy-Premier, the late Sardar Patel.

For two days the Santiniketan Conference discussed Gandhi's "Constructive Programme," which sought to end war and violence by making individuals self-sufficient, and freeing them from their bondage to national policies inspired by war. While the leading newspapers of India and Pakistan indulged their mutual antagonism, a hundred would-be peace-makers considered the system of "Basic Education" designed by Gandhi to meet India's spiritual and social needs.

Into these solemn theoretic deliberations, a stimulating figure from Delhi blew like a gust of fresh air. Acharya\* J. B. Kripalani had once been President of Congress, and at Patna in 1951 was to form a new political party in "friendly opposition" to Premier Nehru. Tall, lithe and dynamic, a *poseur* who enjoyed his poses and never wasted time on repentance, he regarded the seekers after wisdom with ironical amusement. Warning them that by reputation he was heterodox, he began to describe Gandhi "before he became a Mahatma." Wearing a long coloured sash and a shawl flung negligently over his shoulder, he suggested a Renaissance character imported from Europe rather than an intellectual and highly conscious Hindu.

\* A courtesy title similar to "Professor."

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"I worked with Gandhi for thirty years," he announced. "I always irritated him, but I joined him because he was fearless and shameless. I admired him for withstanding ridicule and not caring what others said. In the end I came to be intellectually converted to his theory of non-violence, but never emotionally."

He pushed back his long black hair and smiled sardonically at his audience. Roused from their former attitude of uncritical devotion, they listened expectantly as the light, mocking voice continued.

"When I am asked the usual question, 'What will you do if someone attacks your sister?' I reply, 'Before my brain begins to think, my leg will begin to act.' That is neither violence nor non-violence, but a reflex action."

No one objected to this diagnosis, and he went on.

"Gandhi was not a mystic. He drew people to his prayer-meetings, but sometimes he dealt with very material things. For him the spiritual and material were one; he cleansed everything from latrines to souls. In my opinion he was not a pacifist, because he regarded fear as a greater evil than violence. When he started the Satyagraha movement, he began by taking fear from people's hearts. He looked on weakness and cowardice as the sin against the spirit. Violence at least is positive; fear is negative."

I recalled a comment by Gandhi in *Young India* :

"My creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or room for weakness. There is hope for a violent man to be some day non-violent, but not for a coward."

Some of Gandhi's disciples, such as the French writer Romain Rolland, had tended to regard the Mahatma as a demi-god and his utterances as inspired. It was, I suspected, these ardent followers rather than the Mahatma himself whom Acharya Kripalani had set out to debunk. He was now telling a story.

"One day an indigo planter plundered a village, and the villagers ran away terrified leaving everything behind, including their women. Gandhiji said to them: 'If you could not resist non-violently, you should have resisted violently. The worst thing you could do was to run away.'"

In Gandhi's philosophy, Kripalani continued, non-violence had four psychological stages. First came the fearful man; then

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the violent resister. In the third stage, violence was overcome ; finally the disciple became non-violent in thought, word and deed. Whatever the danger, such a man would never forsake his chosen path.

" I learned from Gandhi," said Kripalani, " that a brave man can be fearful. The non-violent resister is not fearless ; he conquers his fear, and is brave in exactly the same way as a soldier. For Gandhi, spirituality meant the moral life. He thought of God in a queer way—sometimes as a principle, sometimes as truth, sometimes as a person, sometimes as an impersonal person."

The warm Conference room, shaded by blinds, was now quite silent. Outside the windows, the 'Tagores' rich flower-garden blazed in the sun. With Kripalani's words safely netted in my notebook, I recognised that I had received, for the first time, the picture of a man made real by faults and inconsistencies instead of a plaster saint. Kripalani went on to speak more seriously of Gandhi's sense of urgency.

" ' Here and now,' was his slogan. He said : ' Whether the Congress comes or not, I'll go ahead.' He hadn't time to broaden down from precedent to precedent, starting with Magna Carta in 1215, and ending in a Labour Government yesterday. His ' Constructive Programme ' had often been suggested before, as a reform measure, by other Indians and by missionaries. He alone made it dynamic, by hitching it on to a revolutionary movement. Pacifism for him was the creation of a non-violent, non-exploitative society ; it was not what it is for so many people, just part of an old dame's business. He took the Kingdom of Heaven by storm."

A hurricane of discussion broke out, brisk and illuminating. When Acharya Kripalani had answered numerous questions without losing his satirical smile, he gave the roomful of earnest truth-seekers one final word of advice.

" Gandhiji was a genius. It is dangerous to copy a genius, or try to think what he would have done in particular situations. He was always changing his methods. Sometimes he was impatient and sometimes very patient ; he could go underground for years. Genius is self-regulating and often breaks its own laws. You cannot imitate him ; you must learn to deal with your situations in your own way."

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When the session was over I hurried through the camp with a feeling of elation, for I knew now that I was beginning to make those discoveries for which I had come to India. That evening the Press bulletin was my responsibility, for a minor illness had temporarily removed Reginald Reynolds. With the help of Jerome Sauerwein's notes and observations, I began to write at the secluded outdoor table, protected by an awning, which had been allocated to the Press Committee. Here a separate tea, the one privilege of our journalistic assignment, was served to us as we worked. In the office marquee an Indian stenographer sat ready to type the bulletin, and two Press agents waited with philosophical patience for copies to distribute.

The next day, in the long columns which had been reserved by the Indian Press for the first full session of the Conference, it was Acharya J. B. Kripalani's name that stole the headlines.

Kripalani, I gathered, might have been a member of the first Indian Government had he not preferred, by remaining a back-bencher, to safeguard his position as a follower of Gandhi. In July, 1950, he stood again as candidate for President of Congress, but was defeated by Patel's nominee, Purshottamdas Tandon.

When he had gone, the Conference reverted to its philosophical growing-pains. Its members, raising questions which the Germans describe as *gründlich*, tried conscientiously to answer them. How soon could large-scale revolution, such as Gandhi had initiated in India, begin to leaven a society in which starved, oppressed and uprooted millions were regarded as tools rather than ends? What could ordinary men and women do to resolve the human crises of a world shattered by two wars and threatened with a third? Would a study of international tension-centres, such as Kashmir, Palestine, South Africa, Korea, lead to the discovery of some new technique of reconciliation?

Using Kashmir as his theme, a member of the Government Secretariat, Sudhir Ghosh, steadily attempted to bring the assembly back to the Indo-Pakistan dispute.

"The Europeans," he insisted, "will want to know how Gandhiji's followers propose to deal with this conflict."

Many Europeans did want to know; they had become conscious of the tension which hung like a sullen thundercloud over their deliberations. But it was not until the Conference met at

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Sevagram that it began to face this grave sequel to the partition of India.

Listening to the debates with an air of quiet depression sat a stocky, spectacled, middle-aged man in a brown monkish suit half-way between Indian and European dress. The Mahatma's second son, Manilal, had come to Santiniketan from Phoenix, Natal, where he edited the magazine, *Indian Opinion*, founded in South Africa by his father. Unobtrusive and gentle, he remained silent until he was moved to intervene in a long theoretical discussion which led safely away from the subject of Pakistan.

"The mastery of self is the crux of the whole question," announced Manilal suddenly, for the delegates had been considering whether the eternal values could be defended by war. Since such discussions were liable to evaporate in mental fog, everyone waited respectfully for Manilal to continue. He went on with an effort, speaking very slowly.

"I am only a humble servant trying to follow in the footsteps of my father . . . God wants us to humble ourselves to the dust. This cannot be done without the grace of God, and the grace of God can come upon us only by prayer."

Nobody spoke. "We might all go to the scene of the conflict and try to quench the flames," Gandhi had said. Instead, we sat comfortably at Uttarayan debating philosophical absolutes. The son's endeavour to convey the father's message to those who were failing him became a palpable and moving struggle. His sense of unworthiness was almost visible, like the burden carried by Bunyan's Pilgrim.

"Father suffered in the flesh in order that the light might shine out to the masses," Manilal concluded. "He fasted for others, but we must do penance for ourselves. I propose that at Sevagram we undergo seven days' fasting and prayer. Without the grace of God and without humility we can achieve nothing."

Penitence and humility, those fugitive white angels, tended to elude capture even by the best-intentioned international assembly. My old friend Amiya Chakravarty, normally as self-effacing as Manilal Gandhi, was stirred to utterance by an American delegate who confidently described the occupation of Japan as "a miracle of reconciliation."

Amiya, who had recently visited Japan, was now a Professor of English Literature at Howard University in Washington, D.C.,

and had been a convener of the Conference. Time had touched him lightly since he sat by the fire in Chelsea telling travellers' tales to my son and daughter, fifteen years before. Standing with his hands on the Chairman's table, he endeavoured to give a picture of Japan as honest as Kripalani's vignette of Gandhi.

"The people were courteous," he said, "because courtesy lies in their nature. But I believe they are cowed by force, not converted to a pacific view of life. What I found seemed to me to be total paralysis."

The Korean War and the new epoch of militarism which it was to bring to Japan lay in the future, but Amiya spoke "with shame" of the humiliations incidental to a military occupation. He described the billeting of foreigners in homes commandeered from Japanese civilians, the virtual slavery imposed on Japanese servants by American masters, the demoralisation of Japanese women, and the tragedies of illegitimacy for which provision had to be made. The well-meaning American Education Department was threatened, he said, with frustration, since military tentacles had gripped every branch of civilian life.

The three Japanese delegates, embarrassed by this conflict of testimony, remained polite but non-committal. One remarked drily that the American occupation might be the best in history, but this was no reason for wishing it to continue. They reserved further comment for an evening four days later, when a small group at Uttarayan discussed the relation between science and peace. Delegates from Sweden, America, China and Finland had spoken; the full moon rode triumphantly above the evening stars and weary debaters were thinking of bed, when the soft staccato voice of Dr. Tomiko Kora, a Member of the Japanese Upper House, suddenly dispelled the lethargy of fatigue.

"One aeroplane," she said in her difficult English, "came over us when everyone was going to work, and in a moment the town is in flames. Three months after the atom bomb was dropped, I see the Mayor of Hiroshima. He tells me how nearly 300,000 out of 400,000 people died there. They cried for water under the ruins, or they ran about the streets with ribbons of skin hanging from their hands and arms."

The stillness of the Indian night seemed to grow audible as the quiet recital went on.

"I had many friends who lived in Hiroshima, two or three

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miles from where the bomb exploded. To-day they still die from the gamma rays. This bomb was an experiment on the human race. I want our society never to repeat that experiment."

In the Chair that evening sat Miss Pao-Swen Tseng, a headmistress representing the China so often invaded by Japan. The meeting, she said, would now conclude with silence in order to show contrition towards the Japanese people.

"Let us pray," she added, "for the reformation of our actions as human beings, so that repentance may follow the sins of the world."

In the moonlit garden the long black shadows of the palm trees lay motionless across the dusty paths. The only sound was made by some nameless living creature rustling softly through the grass.

At sundown two days later a new library, the Deenabandhu Bhavan, was opened in memory of C. F. Andrews, who had been known to Santiniketan as "Deenabandhu" or "Friend of the Poor." The library, built near the Tata House, was part of a memorial scheme to extend the work of Tagore's university, and provide the rural centre at Sriniketan with a hospital and dispensary.

Beneath a brilliant canopy opposite the Deenabandhu Bhavan, men and women to whom Andrews's name had been a lantern of hope in their distant countries heard the chanting of Sanskrit Mantras, the reading of the Beatitudes by Pastor Henri Roser, and the familiar passage from the Book of Wisdom—"Let us now praise famous men." It was an appropriate passage, for fame is not to be reckoned in royalties and dividends, or in the height of the letters on a neon sign.

Andrews had composed poems which he never published, and for years had endeavoured to write a "Life of Christ" which he never finished. Such a book might have given him satisfaction, but would not have increased his stature; his fame lay in a life of service and a legacy of unshaken convictions. His own lines, *Death the Revealer*, inspired by a dream during his first visit to Santiniketan in 1913, had repudiated the satisfaction of earthly rewards:

"And I can wait the dawning of the day,  
The day star on my night already gleaming,



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The shadow and the veil shall pass away—  
Death shall make true my dreaming."

When the reading from the Book of Wisdom ended, Rathindranath Tagore called on Agatha Harrison, now C. F. Andrews's literary executor, to open the new building. After her short address she broke a garland of scented white flowers hung across the door, and entered the library carrying a lighted lamp which she placed beneath Andrews's portrait. As the sun went down in sudden splendour, the distant quarrelling of the pariah dogs which haunted the camp brought a symbolic reminder of the constant threat of war to the labours of twentieth-century peace-makers.

When the Santiniketan Conference had ended in the mango grove as splendidly as it began, I called at Uttarayan to say good-bye to the Tagores. Although we had watched the students perform Rabindranath's dance-drama, *Chitrangada*, it seemed strange that no time had been set aside to study his work either as a creator of the Bengal Renaissance, or as the maker of experiments in the cause of world peace which had pre-dated Gandhi's. The omission was part of a failure, too often typical of would-be reformers, to appreciate the part played by art and literature in the creation of revolutionary thinking, and to recognise the contribution of India herself to the poetry of human life.

I found Rathindranath and his wife in their handsome living-room, where hand-woven rugs made patches of rich colour on the polished floor. With them were Amiya Chakravarty and Sophia Wadia from Bombay, who had been their guests. On the walls, amid framed manuscript letters written by Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi, hung several of the strange pictures painted by the poet towards the end of his life. They emphasised his claim to be an Indian Leonardo da Vinci in his versatility. During his last years, Tagore had even come to resemble Leonardo's portrait of himself in old age.

He had begun to paint in 1930, and in that year exhibited his pictures in several European cities. Marjorie Sykes has shown, in her short biography *Rabindranath Tagore*, how his drawings developed out of the patterns which he made half-consciously from the erasures on his manuscripts. Like the poems of remembrance in the volume edited by Krishna Kripalani, these melancholy,

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mystical paintings seemed to enshrine the many sorrows of Rabindranath's long life.

His wife, Mrinalini Devi, had died in 1902 after nineteen years of marriage, his daughter Renuka six months later, and his younger son, Samindranath, a boy of thirteen, from cholera in 1907. Eleven years later he lost the eldest of his three daughters, Bela, and the nineteen-thirties brought new bereavements of a kind that weigh heavily upon old age. His nephew Dinendra died while in charge of the music-studies at Santiniketan, and his only grandson as a twenty-one-year-old student in Germany. This boy was the child of his surviving daughter Mira and Professor N. Gangulee, who published the *Testament of Immortality* in his son's memory.

In spite of these personal griefs Rabindranath had retained, with uncomplaining courage, his faith in life. "A serene spirit," says the *Gita*, "accepts pleasure and pain with an even mind, and is unmoved by either. He alone is worthy of immortality." But sorrow, to be endured serenely, must in one form or another find expression. In Tagore's pictures an incomprehensible quality, akin to the wild remoteness in the paintings of Blake, suggests that through this medium the poet's grief became articulate.

After leaving his family, I walked back to the Tata House beneath brilliant stars which appeared much larger than stars seen from the West. The planets Jupiter and Venus, in close conjunction throughout that month, shone with a dazzling silver-blue which distinguished them from the others. Already the nights had grown cold enough to bring a collection of coats and woollen scarves to the meal-tent each evening. In the fresh breeze which carried the scent of trees and flowering shrubs, the ache of head and wrist brought by continuous reporting disappeared.

From the dusty red road, the black tufted silhouettes of the palms threw their shadows across the great plain beneath the full moon. As a man over forty, C. F. Andrews had leapt and sung from sheer exhilaration in his love for the wide-open spaces, the evening skies, the musical cadences of Rabindranath's poetry. Beneath the stars which awaited in unmoved tranquillity the coming of August, 1914, Andrews had composed his own hymn of praise to *The Palms at Santiniketan* :

*Wisdom Lingers*

“ When the last glow of day is dying  
Far in the still and silent West,  
The palm-trees cease their plaintive sighing  
And slowly lull themselves to rest.

“ Through the deep gloom their shapes grow dimmer,  
Rare as the mist-wraiths of the night,  
Only on high the starry shimmer  
Touches their waving tips with light.”

The writer of those lines never forgot that India had beauty, as well as holiness, to contribute to the understanding of those who sought her.

## VII—THE HOLY CITY

“ Great multitudes I see there  
moving with tumult  
along diverse paths in many a group  
from age to age,  
urged by mankind’s daily need in life,  
and in death.

Sorrow and joys unceasing  
blend in chant raising the mighty hymn of life.  
On the ruins of hundreds of empires,  
they go on working.”

Rabindranath Tagore. *Floating on Time’s Leisurely Stream.*

AT DAWN NEXT day an international throng camped on the narrow platform of Bolpur station. Its members had arranged to travel in groups from Calcutta throughout India, and to meet again at Sevagram on Christmas Eve.

In the waiting-room, amid delegates collecting suitcases and bedrolls, Reginald Reynolds and I began jointly to compose an article summarising our impressions of the week at Santiniketan. We continued to write it, dividing the various paragraphs between us, in the crowded Inter-class coach (a category between Second and Third) where places had been nominally reserved for the Conference delegation.

The coach was extremely dirty, and as we had inadvertently seated ourselves near the door of the latrine—a small round hole in a concrete floor better imagined than described—its reluctant but numerous patrons during the four-hour journey fell over us both coming and going. The 1,500-word article was nevertheless completed some time before we reached Calcutta, thus disabusing me of the belief that I could not successfully collaborate with another writer even under the most favourable conditions.

In Calcutta our packed public programmes were strenuously renewed. Conveyed like a human gramophone from end to end of the city by the indefatigable Varma and other volunteer drivers, I found myself addressing a thousand women students at

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the Lady Brabourne College, attending P.E.N. receptions, and lecturing in Calcutta University. At an afternoon "Open Session" in the grounds of the Nizam's Palace, I was the first of twenty speakers whose addresses were relayed throughout the country by the All-India Radio. Three thousand Indians, seated on the ground, listened for over four hours with every appearance of rapt enjoyment. By now my capacity to "take" speeches was even farther from the Indian level than it had been a fortnight earlier, and my fortunate position on the programme enabled me to escape with the Varma for tea at a nearby club.

Next morning Mrs. Charulata Mukherjee drove me to the Industrial Centre of the All-India Women's Conference in North Calcutta, where refugee women from Pakistan were trained to support themselves. In this oldest section of the city, the car left the main road for narrow debris-strewn side-streets known as "lanes." These ancient by-roads teemed with life both human and animal. Small children joined dogs and goats in exploring heaps of refuse; immediately they moved, kites and crows took their place. Large white cows with curved horns strolled between the booths and planted themselves, amiably immobile, in front of the car.

We stopped at the Centre in Bethune Road, started during the Bengal famine to train needy women in various crafts by which they could supplement the family income. After the communal riots in 1945, it became a place where women who had lost husbands and homes could learn to be self-sufficient. A hostel for three hundred students in Vivekananda Road was partly given up to children under twelve. By using the stone floor as a slate, they economised in equipment. I stepped carefully between relief maps showing the exports of India, and squares chalked with red letters which provided lessons in Bengali, Hindi, and English.

That evening I left Calcutta for Benares with seven men of mixed colours and nationalities. Besides George Paine and A. C. Barrington, they included Professor Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu, a Bantu from South Africa; Dr. Isa Sadigh, an ex-Minister of Education from Iran; and Mustafa Bey N'Souli, a government official from the Lebanon. We travelled by a main line train to Delhi known as the Punjab Mail, which stopped at Benares after passing through the Province of Bihar between

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Bengal and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (recently renamed Uttar Pradesh).

At this time the Indian railways had just accomplished their centenary. Much of the rolling stock and many of the lines seemed hardly to have changed since the East India Company agreed to provide them in 1845. Originally they had been built for transporting goods, and were used later to distribute food in famine areas. Though half the trains now carried passengers, their human load appeared to be regarded as a regrettable if essential incubus.

Even for First- and Second-class passengers, equipment was severe and utilitarian ; so far India had found neither the time nor the means to tempt tourists by luxury travel. Wide leather-covered seats, stuffed with horse-hair, added no comfort to the thin mattresses supplied in bedrolls. The wash-rooms adjoining the compartments harboured cockroaches and frequently ran out of water, though quantities always accumulated on the floor.

No corridors linked the coaches on these trains ; each compartment and restaurant-car was self-contained. A passenger who wanted a meal in the buffet-car had to get out at a station and walk to it, returning to his own compartment at a future stop. Since thieves who regarded European travellers as their heaven-sent prey still abounded, this process of complete self-removal left luggage exposed to calculable risks. Most passengers preferred to order their meals on trays, which were brought from the restaurant with their rapidly congealing food protected from flies by over-turned saucers, and dumped in the carriage to be retrieved at another station by the bearer.

Such services were beyond the means of Third-class travellers, whose wooden-seated coaches carried seething, shouting, gesticulating consignments of humanity, accompanied by every conceivable variety of animal and insect life. Many of Gandhi's followers travelled Third in order to identify themselves with the squalor endured by the Indian people.

Their discomfort was not even compensated by safe and reliable trains. Before I left for India, an elderly friend implored me not to travel by air. Brought up in the Victorian age, he still assumed that aeroplanes were always more dangerous than railways, but in India the opposite is true. Well-trained pilots

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and normally perfect flying weather make Air India one of the safest lines in the world except during the monsoon period. Trains, in spite of angry protests by the Prime Minister, have become objects not only of robbery but of sabotage.

When the Punjab Mail was eventually wrecked near Jasidih station in Bihar during May, 1950, the Indian Minister of State for Railways, Mr. Santhanam, announced that no fewer than ninety-one attempts at sabotage had been made between that month and the previous November. Three months later, a similar wreck occurred near Benares. The deliberate removal of fish-plates, nuts and bolts from the line was said to have caused the earlier accident. A correspondent of the American *World Interpreter* gave his own explanation a fortnight afterwards.

"I have just made a trip during which our train passed the spot where, two weeks before, a packed passenger train was toppled off a bridge about midnight. The official report said 36 were killed, but eye-witnesses put the figure at close to 300. The papers said it was sabotage—but many assert that the reason for this sabotage was that this train was carrying many Muslims to Pakistan."

There was nothing I could do about sabotage in a country where human life remained so cheap; it had to be taken in my metaphorical stride. But robbery was a limited risk, to be avoided by sharing a compartment with two or three male companions instead of seeking the privacy of "Ladies' Carriages." Women travelling alone, I gathered, were targets for thieves, who climbed on to the footboards of trains leaving stations, and wriggled into carriages through open windows.

The colourful life of those railway stations was its own reward. Had I travelled in comfort and safety by air, I should never have known that Indian stations are not mere depots for passengers, but social centres where everybody congregates and the train's arrival is the day's great event.

Whatever the time of day or night, each stop brought a noisy, excited mob to the doors and windows. From it emerged a few passengers, struggling with the piles of baggage which suggest that Indian travellers move all their possessions every time they leave home. The rest were meeting friends, seeing them off, or selling goods which varied from sandalwood necklaces, conch shells, brass vases and metal images, to dusty sweetmeats and

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cups of tea. At first this shrill crescendo of anonymous sounds woke me up at intervals during the night, but after two or three weeks I found that I stayed peacefully asleep while vendors pushed their wares through the windows and relatives exchanged heart-rending farewells a few inches from my ear.

At the first stop after dawn the Third-class passengers, whose washing facilities were non-existent, leapt from the train and rushed to the platform pump for their ritual ablutions. One morning I awoke in time to see a slim brown child of five or six jump out at a country station with his baby brother tucked under his arm. He thrust the naked infant beneath the spouting pump, scrubbed his face with a fragment of cloth, and dashed back in triumph to the carriage.

As the day wore on, family parties with picnic baskets camped under the trees outside the stations, hopefully waiting for something to happen. Political tension and the frustrations of caste appeared to have left unimpaired this sociable domestic life, with its tendency to herd the members of the household into one or two rooms even if others were available, and to share verandahs and even beds.

Figures more solitary than these brought India's poverty to her station platforms. Poorest among the poor awaiting the trains were the porters called "coolies" under British rule, but henceforth to be known as "mazdoors." Underfed and emaciated, they carried unbelievable piles of suitcases, which they never dropped, up and down the slippery stone slopes which are India's substitute for outdoor steps. Once the top-heavy loads were securely balanced on their heads, they endeavoured to take into their thin-boned hands yet more of our briefcases, food-baskets, and book-filled carriers.

How much did political emancipation mean to them? Did they even realise the altered status of British travellers? In their dark enigmatic eyes impassively regarding us, there had been, it seemed to me, no hatred.

As the train ran into Benares over the Dufferin Bridge in the early morning, I saw along the Ganges a silhouette of domes and towers which differed dramatically from the outline of the city observed by travellers for 300 years.

In the seventeenth century the Muslim ruler Aurangzeb,



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turbulent son of Shahjahan who built the Taj Mahal, destroyed the second largest temple in the holy city and put up a mosque on its ruins. Known to Hindus as the Great Iconoclast, Aurangzeb crowned his mosque with two minarets which dominated the city and river, and became landmarks for miles. From the taller tower, 700 feet high, it was said to be possible even to see Delhi, 400 miles away.

During 1949, floods from the Ganges, the highest for forty years, undermined many buildings already slipping into the soft mud of the river bank. At nine o'clock one evening a month before our visit the higher of Aurangzeb's minarets suddenly crashed down, miraculously injuring no one amid the heap of debris which engulfed its creator's pretensions. Its partner, 240 feet tall, remained like an admonitory finger towering into the sky.

Pious Hindus were not slow to draw a moral from this spectacular event, for the Muslim ruler's depredations included the city's chief temple to Vishwanath, or Shiva. He had also demolished many other shrines surviving from the immemorial ages seen by India's oldest city, the "Varnasi" of her two great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

On the station platform a vivacious figure in a white saree waved to us hospitably ; it was our hostess, Dr. Thungamma, a medical member of Benares City Council. Her husband, a tall quiet man whose profession we never discovered, unobtrusively collected our luggage.

"We're so glad to see you !" cried Dr. Thungamma with enthusiasm. "We've been expecting you for days. But what a pity we haven't had longer to prepare for you !"

When we learned that the telegram confirming our visit had arrived only an hour before ourselves, we were apologetic but not surprised ; already such mischances appeared quite normal. Having no time to arrange for accommodation, Dr. Thungamma had gallantly decided to put us all up in her own home. Her car deposited us in front of a substantial house standing in a square of garden at the end of a narrow by-road. Inside the house two large bedrooms equipped with iron-framed beds opened into a passage provided with tables, wash-basins, and toilets.

For the seven men the problem of suitable accommodation was conveniently solved, but embarrassing doubts about myself

### *Search After Sunrise*

remained. Later in the day Dr. Thungamma's husband took me aside and discreetly explained the dilemma. Their dining-room was large enough to seat everyone, but the two bedrooms represented their total sleeping resources. Obviously I could not be put among the men ; had I any other proposal to make ?

As I had shared a much more restricted space with two men the previous night, the impossibility of joining up with them did not seem so obvious to me as it might have appeared a month earlier. I have still to understand why it is quite moral to sleep alongside two or three men in a small railway compartment, but most immoral to divide a large bedroom with the same number. But I accepted my host's assumption at its face value.

" Why can't I sleep at one of the colleges ? " I suggested, for I had now learned that there were several in the city.

" That would delay us," he explained patiently. " There is much to be seen in a short time. We do not wish to leave you out, and the colleges are some distance away."

Calcutta had taught me to appreciate the disadvantages of providing transport for several people across India's sprawling cities. A sudden brain-wave suggested another expedient.

" Would you mind," I inquired, " if I slept on the sofa in your living-room after everyone has gone to bed ? "

My host looked much relieved. But remembering the different social habits of an international delegation, I raised another problem.

" The only difficulty is, where shall I wash ? If I use one of the washrooms at the back, the men may feel embarrassed when they want to go there."

Fully appreciating this point, the tall grave Indian responded with typical courtesy.

" My wife and I will make our bathroom available to you. We shall be honoured if you will use it."

This was hospitality indeed. Daily ablutions in India have religious implications only second to those of temple ritual. For a rigidly orthodox Hindu, the European visitor bringing unusual toilet practices into his bathhouse commits a form of sacrilege. The problem was further complicated by the position of Dr. Thungamma's bathroom, which lay beyond the bedroom that she and her husband shared. Characteristically they offered no objection to my use of their bedroom as a passage.

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During the two nights of our stay I undressed in the living-room after the others had retired, used the family desk as a dressing-table, and stole with my flashlight through the darkened bedroom to the wash-house beyond. Santiniketan had made me familiar with the small bowls of beaten brass used to mix the hot and cold water provided in buckets, but I never overcame the temptation to treat a bucket as a lavatory basin instead of pouring its contents over me.

Benares appeared to be dominated by the spirit of Annie Besant, who dedicated a long life to India and Theosophy. She came to the city in 1893, and founded separate boys' and girls' colleges, "for the education of Hindu Youth in the essentials of their ancient faith."

The Boys' School began as a junior department of Benares Hindu University. Five months before our visit, it had been moved into a large ochre and vermilion building with white-painted verandahs near Dr. Thungamma's house. Beneath a marble bust of Annie Besant, a carved inscription recorded the dates of her life, 1847-1933, and continued with a pious hope:

"But few years must pass ere the flame of the funeral pyre shall burn this body. But may we labour so well that, in centuries yet unborn, the name of this place shall shine brightly in the story of India."

That afternoon we drove to Benares Hindu University, five miles from the city. Within a wall nine miles in circumference stretched a series of outsize brick structures, covered in pale stucco the colour of an apricot ice-cream. Against this luscious shade the playing-fields, verdant in the cool winter temperature, appeared a vivid emerald.

Inside the entrance to the Campus, student shops were carrying on a brisk trade in text-books. Here we were met by a member of the Engineering Faculty, highly intelligent and slightly aggressive. He told us that their Engineering School had been founded some years ago by an Englishman, P. S. King.

"At the time," said our guide, "he was much opposed by the British Government. But now, thanks to his work, there are many highly-qualified engineers to help India's construction schemes."

After tea at the University Club we took part in the usual

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public reception under a large awning conveniently erected, not for us, but for the Founder's Day celebrations which would begin next morning. As the first speaker, I addressed rows of empty chairs; until I subsequently protested, my male companions continued to believe that courtesy consisted in allowing the only woman to break the ice. Gradually students and passers-by crept to the edge of the enormous tent, and inspected us with mild curiosity. As the loud-speaker made our voices audible at a great distance, few of them troubled to come inside.

Late that evening we explored the city, where cycle rickshaws, cars, pedestrians, bullocks, goats and camels created a leisurely confusion in the dimly-lighted streets. On the open booths Benares brass-ware reflected the pale glow of the lamps, and embroidered textiles lay in rich heaps beside rainbow-coloured sarees. Near the Vishwanath Temple, forbidden to us except for a glance through an iron grid which screened a back entrance, the upper floor of a small shop was used as a showroom for more precious fabrics.

Here the woven wealth of the materials had been sumptuously threaded with real gold or silver; days were spent by the craftsmen upon each heavily-encrusted yard of crimson or sapphire-blue brocade. To less opulent buyers the salesmen offered chiffon scarves in a variety of brilliant shades; flame, violet, turquoise, saffron, emerald and coral. At each end of the scarf a scintillating border was formed from the metal thread.

Amongst the fabrics were scattered silk and velvet evening bags, constructed in amateur fashion with semi-fitting press-stud fasteners; a suburban housewife using up the remnants of an evening gown might have done as well. But no suburban housewife could have produced the gold and silver flower-patterns on the bags, resembling fleur-de-lis adorned with winking crystals. Still less could she have designed the handsome miniature peacocks, their spread spangled tails decorated with "eyes" made of jade-green embroidery silk and liberally sprinkled with small jewels which simulated sapphires, topaz, and rubies.

These fabrics and bags had been created by Muslim craftsmen; their patterns, rich legacies of great potential value, were family secrets passed on from generation to generation. They wove the domestic life of India into each square inch of jewelled

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craftsmanship, where neither quantity nor speed but quality was the only test.

Next morning our hostess and her colleague, the sanitary inspector of Benares, arranged a journey for us on the sacred Ganges in the municipal launch.

As we followed the sanitary inspector to the top of the steps leading down from the city to the *ghats*, or bathing places, on the river bank, he told us that the floating population of Benares amounted each day to 50,000 persons. This addition to its 250,000 inhabitants came from the Hindu pilgrims, who believed that a bathe in the Ganges was necessary to their salvation and carried home its holy water in brass pots.

"You may think it strange," he added with professional authority, "but no bacterial life is found in these waters within a short distance of the place where the sewage is deposited."

It was not for me to dispute the miraculous properties of the Ganges. From the launch I looked back at the Dawawamedha Ghat where we had just embarked. Close beside it stood the Golden Temple with three mitre-shaped domes of gilded copper; voices within chanted Vedic hymns, and a scent of mingled flowers and incense drifted out to the pilgrims waiting at the doors.

Booths had been established on either side of the great flight of steps leading down to the *ghat*; Brahmins sat under palm-leaf umbrellas, waiting to bless the pilgrims; sacred cows pushed lethargically against the sellers of peacock-feather dusters. The river bank, with its bathing pilgrims added to the men and women washing their faces and clothes, seemed even more crowded than the streets and bazaars. Twenty-one months earlier Gandhi's ashes had mingled with these waters, to be borne, perhaps, past the *ghats* on their way to the sea.

The launch swung out into the middle of the river, here only quarter of a mile wide, and crescent-shaped owing to its northerly bend. From my seat facing east the left bank, crowned by the city high above it, appeared as a vast amphitheatre of *ghats* and temples, their gilded pinnacles glistening like golden candles in the early morning sun, and their bee-hive domes thickly carved with the heads of monkeys and bulls.

The eighty *ghats*, a continuous chain along the four miles of

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river which bounded the city, were dedicated to every form of human activity from birth to death. Marriage parties crowded one, worshippers occupied another, mourners monopolised a third. Between the pilgrims majestically wandered the sacred bulls, seeking like all Indian animals for a surprise meal, and occasionally consuming the garlands round the necks of the corpses laid out to await cremation. As the launch passed the Manmandir Ghat, we noticed the ruins of a white and yellow palace which had fallen into the river. Nemesis had come upon it, said local legend, because the builders laying the foundations had disregarded a sage praying on the spot and immured him within its walls.

The Manikarnika Ghat where the dead were burned was not only the chief crematorium of Benares, but the pivot of Hindu religious life. As we floated past the smoking pyres, corpses wrapped in coloured silk were carried on bamboo stretchers to await their turn in the queue. The mourners had already taken them to the river brink, where holy water was poured into their mouths and their feet were immersed to straighten their legs. When the corpse's turn came, the male relatives responsible for performing the ceremony lifted it on to a heap of wood which they set alight.

"The wood costs ten rupees, including tax," explained our guide. "People who are too poor to pay have to carry their own."

This primitive form of cremation was not always skilfully conducted; I watched one son or brother conscientiously raking on to the pyre a long brown leg which had become detached from the flaming corpse. An acrid smell of burning flesh drifted with us down the river. It seemed odd to see pilgrims cleaning their teeth in the water which received the human ashes.

"This is how Hindus dispose of their dead," the guide continued informatively. "Muslims and Christians are buried; Parsees are eaten by vultures."

"Which would you prefer?" I asked Barry, but he was too busy with his camera to reply. We were passing a half-submerged temple which had slipped into the river over thirty years ago; its carved stone summit, like a hive of drowning bees, still protruded from the water. On the top stood a red image of Ganesh, the elephant-headed god incongruously known as the rectifier of calamities.

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The boatmen turned the launch, and a water-buffalo poked its head from the river like a black Ganesh come to life. When we passed the Burning Ghat again, two corpses of women, wrapped as usual in red, were lying side by side. One, shrouded in costly brocade made by the Benares Society, belonged, we were told, to a wealthy family. Between them, cheerfully indifferent to the social distinctions so soon to be lost in anonymous ashes, hopped two grey birds with scarlet beaks.

Overhead the pale blue canopy of sky was still softened by mist, but at ten o'clock the mounting sun had grown strong enough to make the open launch uncomfortable. We stepped ashore over wooden boats moored close to the bank, and travelled by municipal bus to Sarnath, "the Deer Park," on a hill outside the city. Here Gautama Buddha, renouncing his wife and infant son with his comfortable life, came alone about 522 B.C. to preach his new doctrine :

" Blessed Nirvana—sinless, stirless rest—  
That change which never changes ! "

A white modern temple, the Mulagandhakuti Vihara, had been built on this spot in 1931 by the Maha Bodhi Society of India to commemorate the birthplace of Buddhism. Inside the ornate monument, a golden image of the Buddha looked on walls frescoed by Japanese artists in the Ajanta cave style with scenes from his life. The chief artist, Kosetsu Nosu, had completed his work with a modest inscription.

" I pray to Lord Buddha with folded hands as I fervently believe that the completion of this humble work depended absolutely on his unbounded mercy. A.D. 1936."

Half a mile nearer to Benares we had passed a large *stupa*, or relic tower, which marked the place where Buddha first gave his new creed to five former disciples. This dilapidated survival was known as the Chowkhandi Stupa, or Humayun's Tower, in memory of the visit made to Sarnath in the sixteenth century by Humayun, father of the Emperor Akbar. Its giant fellow, the Dhamekh Stupa, stood at Sarnath itself ; shaped like a rounded octagon made from stone blocks, it was fastened together by iron bolts. A brick tower piled on the top raised its height to 100 feet.

Close to the Vihara Temple grew a straggling banyan tree,

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believed by the faithful to be the actual tree under which Buddha had sat for years doing penance and receiving enlightenment. Between this tree and the Chowkhandi Stupa had once spread the series of Buddhist monasteries where Hiuen Tsang, a Chinese traveller, had seen 1,500 priests in the seventh century. Sarnath, like Benares, endured its age of iconoclasm ; for 600 years the shrines lay in ruins, haunted by the memory of past devotions.

By 1794, memory had faded almost to oblivion. In that year two relics were discovered in a third *stupa* by Jagat Singh, who dismantled the tower afterwards called by his name without realising its historic importance. Slowly, over 150 years, the story of the Lord Buddha and his monasteries was retrieved. Excavations began round the base of the Jagat Singh Stupa in 1907, and the foundations of the monasteries at last lay open to the light.

The ghosts of the monks had vanished, but life still abounded on those ancient sites. In the strong midday sunshine, yellow butterflies alighted on stone fragments 2,000 years old. From an enclosed passage like a fossilised trench, an ababeel bird streaked into the sky on its sapphire flight.

Human life, and not only our own, was at Sarnath too. Outside the Vihara Temple a young woman, short of stature, with glowing dark eyes and abundant black hair piled on the top of her head, had joined our party. She was a friend, she said, of Dr. Thungamma, who had told her about our expected visit.

"I am a poetess," she explained. "I was converted to Buddhism from the Hindu religion. I stay at Sarnath so that the spirit of the Lord Buddha may enter into my work."

We explored the monastic ruins together, and the poetess returned with us to luncheon at Dr. Thungamma's house. When the conversational meal was over, Barry and I set out for a walk ; we shared a preference for sight-seeing in the everyday streets of living cities.

The ancient roads swarmed with rickshaws, bullock-carts, supercilious-looking camels, stray dogs, unattended cows and naked children. Cars rarely penetrated the sociable galaxy ; when they did appear nobody moved out of their way until the last moment, and then only with the deliberation of a people whose recorded history began three millenia before automobiles



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were invented. Motor accidents in India are few ; drivers have been disciplined by leisurely, indifferent pedestrians, who unlike the pedestrians of Britain and America still command the street.

That evening I returned from a mixed club in the old British cantonment outside the city to find that I had a sleeping companion of my own sex. The Buddhist poetess had decided to camp for the night at Dr. Thungamma's house ; she lay stretched with every appearance of comfort on the top of a spare dining-room table which stood at the end of my improvised couch.

## VIII—N O R T H E R N I N T E R V A L

“ Marble, I perceive, covers a multitude of sins.”

Aldous Huxley. *Jesting Pilate.*

FROM BENARES WE travelled north-west to Lucknow, where heavy blankets were needed at night to keep out the cold which percolated through unglazed windows from open verandahs. A missionary teacher, Gladys Owen, met us at the station; this time we were conveniently distributed between several local households.

By coincidence I went to the home of the A. N. Saprus opposite the Council Chamber, for in 1948 my husband had stayed at Allahabad with my host's brother, Judge Saprus. The brothers belonged to an aristocratic legal family which came, like the Nehrus, from Kashmir. Their father, Sir Tej Bahadur Saprus, had been a friend of C. F. Andrews, who stayed at the Allahabad house while recovering from a choleraic attack in 1917.

A son and daughter of my host drove me from the station; they wore like armour the self-contained, intimidating reserve characteristic of their generation. Their severe semi-invalid father, a member of the Provincial Legislature, proved to be more approachable than they. The gentle, fastidious courtesy of his wife excluded all forms of controversy, as though she were guarding her household against unruly guests.

She led me into a large ground-floor bedroom, politely apologising for the Indian-style bathroom though its equipment was exceptional. The lavatory basin had taps, and a capacious drainage channel disposed of the superfluous hot water which the visitor having a “ bath ” out of buckets is normally obliged to pour all over the floor. This time there was no shortage of space; the high room, with windows surrounding the ceiling, appeared to extend to the roof. Outside on the verandah slept the family servants, a customary safeguard for rooms level with the street.

To our surprised relief we were not expected to hurry at once to a public building and address a large crowd. Though we had come to Lucknow only for thirty-six hours, the deliberate self-

### *Northern Interval*

possessed pace of the Saprus' own lives seemed to be reflected in our arrangements. My evening passed quietly in watching a film of Gandhi's life, compiled by the Ministry of Information from photographs showing different phases of his work. The final scenes by the Jumna River sent me to bed meditating on the parallels between Gandhi's death and the Crucifixion, with which India had begun to compare it. Contrasts existed too ; there was no Lord Mountbatten on his knees at Calvary.

Lucknow impressed me next day as a modern city compared with Benares, though mosques, minarets, palaces, domes, and pavilions appeared to be numerous. Its well-laid streets, passing through acres of green park, might have belonged to the suburbs of Chicago. In spite of the previous peaceful evening, we had come here to be seen rather than to see ; the clean roads and practical buildings did not suggest a tourists' paradise.

To Gladys Owen's school, Nur Manzil in the Lal Bagh, thirty of Lucknow's poorest children came for lessons. Here a group of local women awaited me round the coffee table. A tall handsome girl introduced herself as a niece of Krishna Menon ; like the High Commissioner she came from the Malabar Coast. At ten o'clock my travelling companions appeared ; a truck was due to pick us up for a tour round the city, but as usual it arrived an hour late. As I had promised to address the Isabella Thoburn College, an American mission school, at 11.45, only three-quarters of an hour remained to me for sight-seeing.

The bright scarlet truck dashed off through the streets at a speed which would have killed the leisurely pedestrians of Benares. Scattering everything to right and left, it made for the Old Residency where a handful of British, with their wives and children, put up a last fight against the Sepoys during the Indian Mutiny. On our way I caught dizzy glimpses of narrow bazaars with overhanging wooden balconies. In the wider streets clean modern shops sold gold and silver brocades, embroidered caps and slippers, bead-trimmed sarees, perfumes and spices, sandal-wood boxes, and hookahs in cheerful colours with snake-like stems.

At the Residency a collection of fire-scarred ruins stood like survivals from a modern blitz in a beautiful and oddly serene garden. The little guns and cannon-balls in front of the old building which the Sepoys had burned were pathetic symbols of

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British power in India, but the garden seemed to say that the past had gone and might be allowed to rest in peace. Both sides could now look back on the Mutiny as a full-fledged adult, half-astonished and half-indulgent, recalls his youthful passions.

The truck stopped with a shattering bump at the Isabella Thoburn College, where the Principal was waiting for me. A calm, capable-looking woman, she wore a seasonable woollen cardigan over her cotton dress. The College resembled its counterparts in Calcutta except that the ground-space was larger; mission schools in India appeared to be built on a similar practical pattern, with large stone-floored classrooms and connecting verandahs. A small chapel with a memorable window distinguished this College from others; the Cross above the altar was made from squares of blue glass, recalling the similar Cross in the East window at the London Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

I followed the Principal into the Assembly Hall, where 300 English-speaking girls between sixteen and twenty sat in disciplined rows. These vulnerable young women, eager, sensitive, and beautiful, represented the literate minority of Indian women whose shoulders would carry the burden of the future; I wished that I could have spent the day with them. Since no time had been available for preparing a speech, I talked to them informally of the hopes which had brought so many strangers to India, and the meaning, as I saw it, for young Indians of Mahatma Gandhi's work.

After lunching with the Saprus, I crossed the road to the white-walled Council House, and entered the Chamber where Sarojini Naidu had presided as Governor until her death the previous March. On my way from the station I had been driven past the Governor's Residence, a solid white building from which her spirit seemed to have escaped into the purple and scarlet bougainvillea that made a carnival of the garden.

Mrs. Naidu, said the Prime Minister after her death, was a greater person than Governors are normally supposed to be; when she threw herself into the struggle for freedom, "her whole life became a poem and a song." Although she was regarded as India's leading writer and Tagore's successor, she did not forget to be an efficient Governor. Under her régime the United

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Provinces started a scheme for compulsory education which had already reached three-quarters of the boys between six and eleven, and was soon to be extended to girls.

At Lucknow University that afternoon, I spoke to the student audience which Nehru had rebuked during the University's Silver Jubilee the previous January. When he came to receive his Doctorate, he had recalled the demonstrations recently led by students through the Lucknow streets; they suggested to him that some of his fellow Indians were taking their freedom too easily, and indulging in too much talk.

"To-day is the time for work in this nation," he had reminded them caustically. "For this generation of ours, if I may say so, is condemned to hard labour . . . When I see our young men behaving as they do, when I see young men and hysterical young women misbehaving, I am angry, I tell you . . . Have you any idea of the burden of those whom you have put in the seats of authority? Criticise them by all means. But the hardest sentence you can give to any individual to-day in India is to put him in a seat of authority."

With Mrs. Naidu and Tagore as examples, we discussed the place of authors in modern life. The students were still debating how a synthesis could be created between art and executive action when I had to leave for a reception arranged by the new Governor at the Burlington Hotel. The Prime Minister had not attempted to replace Mrs. Naidu by a lesser Hindu, for Lucknow was largely a Muslim city; nor did he risk offending the considerable Hindu population by choosing a Muslim. Instead he had imported a Parsee, Sir H. P. Mody, from Bombay. A Press photograph in *The Times of India* subsequently showed this small, round, bald-headed man "in peaceful conversation" with me at the reception, where we sat side by side in two easy chairs so large and deep that I had to cling to the arm of mine to avoid disappearing altogether.

In the middle of the tea-party, when the guests were about to say their pieces, a congregation of green parrots in a tree outside the window began to screech like a hundred rusty brakes being jammed on together. They were still screeching when I was called upon, as usual, to begin the oratorical display, for the hour was sundown when the parrots move from one tree to roost in another. As soon as I had stopped trying to be audible, the

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pandemonium ceased. The men profited from my unequal contest with the bird life of India.

That night we had arranged to take the train to Agra. At a dinner-party with the Saprus and their friends which I was reluctant to leave, each guest assured me that I could easily reach the train in fifteen minutes though nobody seemed to know when it went. Eventually a young doctor, the host of Dr. Sadigh, offered to drive me to the station. After the customary scramble up and down the steep concrete slope, I found Barry anxiously waiting for me in the subdued light of the hurricane lamps.

"You're last," he said. "I was beginning to think you weren't coming."

"Is this the train?" I inquired.

"Yes, but the Firsts are full." This dignified class did not represent our economic resources, but the courtesy of the Indian Government which permitted Conference delegates to travel First with Second-class tickets. "We're all together in a Second," he added.

"Which of us are together?" I asked.

"You, me, George Paine and Henri Roser."

We packed into the small dusty compartment, where Henri and Barry took the upper berths. Outside on the platform stood a group of Jains, led by a giant in a yellow turban. They had hoped to arrange a reception for us, but as our programme was full they had come to see us off. To each of us they presented a bamboo basket filled with oranges, bananas, and nuts, and an outsize garland of damp cool marigolds which they hung round our necks.

When the train started we draped the garlands over the stationary electric fans on the ceiling, where they hung like Christmas decorations round the only light. When this was put out the darkness became so intense that none of us dared to open a door for fear of choosing the wrong one. Tired as usual by the day's long programme, I fell asleep in an atmosphere of oranges, bananas, and marigolds. After midnight I was briefly disturbed by a whirring sound, and some soft substance like snowflakes falling on my face.

Barry, it appeared, had wakened, and wanting to know the time had reached for the electric light. Instead he switched on

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the fans, with their sumptuous adornments. In the morning we found our beds submerged in marigold petals, as though a group of exuberant guests had been celebrating a wedding.

Along the right bank of the Jumna River, the towers and minarets of Agra resembled the continuous temples of Benares on the left bank of the Ganges. The three marble domes of the Pearl Mosque seemed to rest on the red walls of Fort Agra like silver bubbles which a light breeze might blow away.

In the dry season the Jumna is a modest river, flowing between sandy flats which are often replenished by hot dust-storms blowing from the deserts of Rajputana. Parched as the flats appear, they yield a rice-crop which can be gathered before the monsoon rains turn the narrow stream into a giant flood. From the railway embankment the peasants cultivating the rice appeared as a long line of ants in the desert sand.

Our numbers were now reduced to four, since Dr. Sadigh had decided to remain in Lucknow, and Henri Roser had left the train with Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu at the junction for Aligarh. We alighted at the Cantonment Station, but no one appeared to be expecting us; this time the telegram sent in advance had evidently failed to arrive at all. For half an hour we sat on our bedrolls in the red station dust while George Paine tried to telephone to the Congress Party's office. When this attempt to locate a sponsor proved unsuccessful, we piled our luggage into a tonga and took a taxi to the European-style hotel recommended by a station official.

This hotel, luxurious by Indian standards, had catered for English visitors in the days of Britain's imperial glory. Apparently it still attracted guests who demanded comfort, for a long driveway led between flowering shrubs to a verandah equipped with marble-topped tables and large basket chairs. The verandah was now empty and the hotel quiet, since the moon was down; the tourist's dream of visiting the Taj Mahal by moonlight was a refinement which the makers of our programme had not been able to provide.

As George and Barry tried to explain our predicament to the office clerk, a white-haired woman in a grey coat and skirt came through the open doorway. Though her face, like all Western faces in India, had been lined by the sun, she was obviously

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British and the proprietress of the hotel. As she crossed the verandah to speak to us, the tonga rattled in with our baggage. The bedrolls and suitcases had not been improved by dumpings in Santiniketan sand ; they were poor relations of the expensive luggage which had adorned the verandah in the recent past. With well-justified suspicion, the proprietress glanced from our grimy possessions to our jaded selves.

After three weeks of continuous travelling, we were now almost as dilapidated as our baggage. Only George Paine, being American and therefore better equipped than the rest of us, had managed to appear as usual in a clean white shirt. The proprietress glanced from him and Barry to Mustafa N'Souli, and then at me.

"One of these gentlemen is your husband ?" she suggested discreetly, but I repudiated the honour.

"No, none of them," I said. As her look of suspicion deepened, I added hastily, "We're an international delegation. Somebody ought to have met us at the station, but as no one was there, the station master advised us to come here."

We showed her our delegates' labels saved from Santiniketan, and she became quite human.

"I haven't many rooms," she said. In the half-empty hotel it was clear that she meant "many rooms of the kind you can afford" ; on the bill that we subsequently paid, we found that we had been charged at the special rate reserved for missionaries. She added encouragingly : "But I think I can put you up for the night. Shall I ask the waiter to get you some breakfast ?"

Though midday was approaching, we welcomed the suggestion ; even in India, oranges and nuts never appeared a wholly suitable prelude to a continuous programme. Over coffee, toast, and omelettes, our spirits rose as we discussed our plans. Another conscientious attempt to trace our "contact" proved unavailing ; he materialised only the next morning in the person of a journalist named Ram Sharma. Seated amid newspapers and correspondence on the floor of his house in the Balka Basti, we then drank the tea and ate the home-made sweetmeats provided by his family while he urged us to remain in Agra for several days and address large audiences.

"Why don't we go and see the Taj Mahal ?" demanded George Paine when the telephone call had drawn a blank. "We shan't need lunch after all this."



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The chance of sight-seeing without speeches on our conscience seemed indeed too good to be missed. In addition to breakfast, a wash in a Western-style bathroom where the taps actually provided hot water had removed our fatigue together with the accumulated dust of continuous journeys.

"Come on, then," said George. "Let's get started!"

We summoned two of the tongas waiting in the drive; George and Mustafa climbed into one, and I, to balance Barry's bulk, sat with him in the other. The tonga, a high horse-drawn vehicle resembling a dog-cart, suited us better than the cycle-rickshaws in which we were always conscious of over-burdening the light-boned cyclist. But a tonga, though less embarrassing, is also less comfortable. The narrow double seat behind the driver, in which passengers travel with their backs to the horse, tips steeply downwards and gives little floor-space even for small feet.

After I had fallen over Barry several times and he had barely avoided being pitched into the road, we concluded that our weight would be better distributed if he travelled sideways across the back seat while I sat on the box with the driver. As the step leading to the box was level with my shoulder, Barry hauled me up to it over the wheel. From this elevated position I had a good view of the park-like modern suburbs between our hotel and the Taj two miles away.

Twenty-five years earlier, Aldous Huxley had looked at the Taj Mahal and found his own mind more rewarding. I had expected a similar if less confident reaction; it is not, after all, witty or original to admire what mankind has agreed to regard as a wonder of the world. How much cleverer to dismiss the Taj as the dome-shaped birthday-cake that it appeared on picture postcards!

But after I had seen the Jaipur marble of Shahjahan's creation, like a song of praise in the afternoon sunshine, I could not persuade myself to be original or clever. The Taj does not cause the spirit to soar like the ascending spires of austere Gothic; it is a triumph of conspicuous consumption, a monument conceived as the shrine of an Emperor's passion which became the arrogant testimony of his power and pride. But to deny it beauty is to refuse recognition to the luscious exotic loveliness of a white camellia or an arum lily.

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In the cypress-bordered pool which linked the entrance gate of red sandstone to the marble platform supporting the tomb, domes and minarets reappeared like an unbelievable mirage. Above them the eagles swept in majestic rhythm against the clear winter sky. Small striped squirrels, insignificant symbols of impudence ignoring dignity, scampered in the garden surrounding the pool.

This ornamental garden, incongruously known as the Mac-Donnel Park, had been laid out, for reasons best known to its British originators, during the great famine of 1897. It still contained many rare flowers and plants, but the coloured fish that once inhabited the pools had disappeared. The marble mausoleum which had given Queen Mumtaz-i-Mahal her expensive immortality appeared impervious to time and politics, but subtle symptoms of encroaching dilapidation were visible in the garden.

I followed Mustafa N'Souli and his camera to the carved doorway of the central cenotaph chamber, where the dust of Shahjahan and his wife lay in the vault beneath the jewelled facsimiles of their tombs. The guardian of the chamber, a white-bearded Khadim who recited continuous prayers which echoed from the hollow interior of the dome, guided Barry and myself with his lantern down stone steps into subterranean darkness.

After the sombre gloom of that place where proud ambitions had reached their inevitable end, the sunlight beating on the marble platform dazzled us into temporary blindness. Beneath the wall surrounding the platform flowed the Jumna River, with the burden of industrious life on its banks, but deprived of my shoes which I had left at the entrance I was not tall enough to look over the edge.

"Here goes!" said Barry, picking me up and depositing me on the wall as easily as he had lifted me to the box seat of the tonga.

I was not sure how much I appreciated these constant reminders of physical inferiority, but they obviously gave great satisfaction to him. Now I could see the steel-blue waters of the Jumna reflecting the white dome and the placid sky. The ant-like workers on the short-lived rice fields appeared as diligent men and women laboriously fighting their perpetual battle against starvation.

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Back at our hotel, George Paine planned further expeditions. We ought to go, he said, to Fatephur Sikri, the sandstone and marble city which the Emperor Akbar had built twenty-four miles from Agra, but was obliged to abandon two decades later because he had forgotten to provide for an adequate water supply. After that we should still have time to tour the Fort if only everything went according to plan.

This standard of efficiency proved, as usual, to be unattainable ; George was obliged to accept the necessity of returning to the United States without adding Fatephur Sikri to his list of accomplishments. We compromised by driving a mere two or three miles to the tomb of Etmad-ud-daulah, the Persian adventurer who was grandfather to Mumtaz-i-Mahal. At some unspecified date this white marble shrine with its four octagonal towers had been used as a summer-time club, owing to its stone interior and large garden on the Jumna's left bank. At the entrance gate an inscription referred briefly to this period of desecration.

"The Barodan under British rule was converted into a residence and rented out as a cool summer resort, but the practice was subsequently discontinued, and the modern additions removed."

Next morning, after the talk with Ram Sharma, three hours remained before our train left for Delhi. Hopefully I carried my notebook to the hotel verandah, and Barry opened the new portable typewriter which he used continuously for long letters and reports to his family. But George, inexorable and inexhaustible, had determined upon a united expedition to the Fort. As we summoned two more tongas I shook my head apologetically at an old bird-fancier who had come periodically to the verandah steps during the past twenty-four hours, waiting for me to watch his performing doves.

For an hour and a half we walked inside the red castellated walls of the great semi-circular Fort, covering two or three miles in the morning heat as we examined ornamental gateways, painted ceilings, carved screens, and inlaid cupolas. Beside the thrones of white marble and black slate built for themselves on an outdoor platform by the Emperors Shahjahan and Jahangir, our guide came to a temporary halt ; he began a long story while George painstakingly recorded his information.

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I snatched the opportunity to escape from the guide, who had reproachfully summoned me at intervals to be more appreciative, and concealed myself in the Jasmine Tower which overlooked the Jumna. Here, unfilially imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb, the iconoclast of Benares, Shahjahan had died in the year of London's Great Fire which gave his opportunity to another famous builder, Christopher Wren.

From these battlements the Emperor had looked for the last time at the Taj Mahal, created by 20,000 anonymous labourers who had worked for seventeen years. I looked at it too, transformed by the midday heat-haze into the pale pink of a cultured pearl, poised for all time on the river brink. The multitude of sins that it covered had crumbled into history with the bodies of Shahjahan and his queen, but the achievement of the anonymous workers remained. It was as their memorial, exploited philosophic ancestors of the rice-growers beside the river, that I saw the Taj Mahal.

## IX—INDIA'S WASHINGTON

“ At this solemn moment when the people of India, through suffering and sacrifice, have secured freedom, I . . . a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, do dedicate myself in all humility to the service of India and her people, to the end that this ancient land attain her rightful place in the world and make her full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.”

(Pledge taken by all Members of the Constituent Assembly at New Delhi present on 14th August, 1947, after the stroke of midnight.)

WHEN WE ARRIVED in Delhi late that evening, I learned that I was to be the guest of the Shiva Raos in Hardinge Avenue. This wide road in the residential quarter of New Delhi had been named after the Viceroy who organised the Royal Durbar of 1911, where George V announced the transfer of India's capital to Delhi from Calcutta.

Instinctively I compared the dignified avenue and palatial house with the first sight that I had seen in Delhi. On a rubbish tip outside the station, refugees from Pakistan were living in unlighted shacks ; their rough shelters recalled the “ Cardboard City ” or “ Dungle,” occupied by criminals and periodically burned down by the police, on the outskirts of Kingston, Jamaica. Delhi seemed more spacious than Calcutta, but was also colder ; I doubted whether the refugees in the ragged shacks had found more comfort than their fellow-exiles a thousand miles away outside Dum-Dum airport.

At the house I discovered that my host and his wife were absent at Lake Success, where he represented India on the United Nations ; instead a short, impressive woman in a richly-coloured saree met me on the door-step. From the lighted room behind her came the ebb and flow of sociable conversation.

“ I am Kamaladevi,” she said. “ The house is partly closed but I am camping here for the present, so I asked if you could come.”

“ Of course I know your name,” I said. Agatha Harrison had often spoken of this conspicuous Socialist, Shrimati Kamaladevi

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Chattopadhyaya, who habitually used only her first name. She had been President of the All-India Women's Conference in 1944, and was visiting England on her way to the United States and Canada when the Second World War broke out. After returning to India she had started a training camp, the first to prepare Indian women for social work.

"Can you come in straight away?" Kamaladevi demanded. "We expected you two hours ago."

It dawned upon me that the elegant cosmopolitan men and women whom I had seen through the door had been invited to meet me. Evidently another telegram had gone astray, precipitating me by its absence into a smart semi-official party dressed in a travel-stained jersey suit and shoes still dusty from the long tramp round Agra Fort.

"Do you really mean me to come as I am?" I asked. "I've been travelling in these clothes for three weeks."

"They will understand. You'd better come directly you have washed your hands; they have all been waiting so long."

Neither then nor later did I grasp the names of the numerous guests who were introduced to me as I stood by the table balancing a plateful of spiced vegetarian food. Everyone else, it was clear, had eaten long ago. Towards midnight I found myself on a sofa beside a young man who described himself as the Secretary of the World Federal Government Movement. A meeting of the movement, he announced, had been arranged for the following evening, with myself as the speaker and Arthur Moore, the veteran ex-editor of *The Statesman*, in the chair.

"But I've never been told about this," I said. "I don't altogether agree with the aims of the World Government Movement. Can't you get another speaker?"

The secretary looked abashed.

"We assumed you would be glad to do it . . . I am afraid the programme cannot be changed; the meeting has been widely advertised in the Press. But," he added, brightening, "it does not matter. You can give us your opinions and say where you do not agree with us, and then we can have a discussion!"

When at last I was free to unpack and undress, I understood Kamaladevi's reference to "camping." The stately house, owing to the absence of its hospitable owners, abounded in strange contrasts. My large ground-floor room had a comfortable bed, and

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a double french window looking over the garden ; adjoining it a resplendent European-style bathroom was equipped with a big porcelain bath-tub into which a bearer poured two bucketfuls of hot water each morning. But the cupboard doors were sensibly locked against intruders, so that I was obliged to live in my suit-cases, and festoon such garments as I unpacked all round the room on any piece of furniture that would support a coat-hanger.

Breakfast and occasional tea were provided by an efficient pale-skinned butler, whose polite attitude of perpetual concern at first caused me to take him for a member of the family. Whenever I wanted anything he appeared as though by intuition from the kitchen, and brushed my battered grey suit so thoroughly that I thought it had been cleaned.

The diminished household did not serve luncheon or dinner, but these meals were provided through the private parties arranged by Kamaladevi. She lived, I discovered, with a grown-up son in Bombay, and had come to Delhi to attend the Indo-American Conference then sitting. Each morning, courteous, sombre and baffling, she presided over the coffee-pot, and then vanished for the rest of the day. Her reserved manner and long conversational silences recalled another woman Socialist, Susan Lawrence, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health in the second British Labour Government. Only the sarees made from costly satins and brocades seemed inconsistent with a personality so hard to assess and difficult to know. She became most human when describing her periods of imprisonment under British authorities, which added up to a total of five years.

Late in the evenings she returned from her Conference, changed into another splendid saree, and took me out to dinner. The friendliness that I found in various households taught me to pity the British sahibs and their exclusive wives who had deliberately foregone this hospitality. It had only one aspect which put some strain on the adaptability of a Western visitor.

When Europeans or Americans go out to dinner, drinks are served on arrival and the meal follows promptly ; conversation does not become general until it is eaten. Indian dinner-parties reverse this procedure. General conversation, sometimes for two or three hours, precedes the drinks, which are usually soft ; a late meal follows, and immediately it is over the guests disperse.

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After a succession of crowded days, I found the long unaccustomed wait for food and the simultaneous demand on my conversational powers difficult to sustain. But allowing, as a foreign guest must, for such differences of national etiquette, the welcome offered to a stranger could not have been more cordial and reassuring.

The day after my arrival, I called on the High Commissioner for Pakistan, Mr. Mohammad Ismail, whose official residence happened to be conveniently located in Hardinge Avenue. Barry came with me; we had finally decided that if the Conference could not move to Karachi, we would go there ourselves. Here in Delhi we stood at one centre of the Indo-Pakistan conflict; a visit to Karachi would complete the picture. An isolated intimation of hope assuaged the tension which was to reach the brink of war after we left India; in Delhi an India-Pakistan Friendship Association had been formed, with Acharya Jugal Kishore as its President.

Although the day was Sunday, we found the High Commissioner at home and willing to receive us. We announced at once that we were delegates to the ostracised Conference at Santiniketan, but he still appeared to favour our proposed visit. I handed over the introductions to the Ministers of Information and Education given me by Mr. Habib Rahimtoola in London, and a letter from my husband to Miss Fatima Jinnah.

"I'll send them on to my Government in the morning," the High Commissioner assured me. It would be necessary, he told us, to travel to Karachi by air; train connections were still severed between India and Pakistan.

The advertised meeting on World Government cast its uncomfortable shadow over the rest of the day. When I faced an audience which had come to hear me echo its convictions, our differences of opinion proved as embarrassing as I had expected.

"I believe in beginning at the bottom, as Gandhiji did," I told them. "We need a social transformation before we can get a World Government, and the transformation must start with the individual. The World Federal Government Movement wants to begin with a change at the top, and I don't think that's likely to happen."

My eminent Chairman, according to the *Hindustan Times* next day, "sharply disagreed."



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" Wars do not come from the people," said Arthur Moore. " They start at the top, from governments and business interests. In religion the individual approach may be fruitful, but it does not apply in the same way to bringing about a world community."

I regretted this public divergence, which I had not sought, with the elderly editor who looked like a colonel, but had spent his life in raising the standard of journalism throughout India. I was to find the integrity of Arthur Moore stamped on his newspaper in every city where I read it. Throughout the Indo-Pakistan dispute, it held an even balance between the two countries ; when their journalists descended to reciprocal abuse, the reports published by *The Statesman* became the only news that I could trust.

A Monday morning visit to the offices of Thomas Cook and Son in Connaught Square to buy an air ticket from Bombay to Karachi gave me an opportunity to look at New Delhi. I started early, for at eleven o'clock we had been promised seats in the Legislative Assembly to hear the debate on the Hindu Code Bill. The sun was already hot as I hurried to my nine-thirty appointment, but the north-easterly winds of winter blew down upon the city from the Himalayas.

Premier Nehru had referred in a recent speech to the succession of cities which Delhi had seen in the ages known to human history. Between the Hindu city of Dilli which succeeded the legendary Indraprastha, and the modern New Delhi planned as carefully by its architects as Washington, D.C., seven Muslim cities had linked Kutab-ud-din-Aibak, who founded the Slave Dynasty, with the energetic Shahjahan. The existing Delhi resourcefully combined the Muslim Old Delhi of the Red Fort and the Jama Masjid with the new model city of Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker. Like Shahjahan these modern architects had sought their materials all over India, bringing white and red sandstone from Bharatpur and Dholpur, and collecting from other States many varieties of marble in green, yellow, grey, pink, and black. The construction of their New Delhi took only a year longer than the building of the Taj Mahal.

The creators of those grand avenues and royal roads had not foreseen the refugees, who were now encamped in main shopping centres such as Connaught Circus and Connaught Place. In the

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large arcades which followed the direction of the circular roadway, imposing shops were selling gold, silver and jade ornaments set with precious stones, fine white muslins embroidered in bright-coloured silks, lacquered boxes, toys and walking sticks, and local glazed pottery of a clear turquoise blue. But when I tried to inspect these wares more closely, my view was impeded by the booths, pavement stalls and hand-carts which formed a temporary barricade between the shop windows and the street.

The pavement-sellers appeared to have cornered some homely necessities, using their monopoly to increase the price. In the shops round Thomas Cook's office, I could find neither a stationer to sell me envelopes nor a chemist who could provide me with Kleenex tissues. Both these commodities were readily obtainable at a fancy figure from the usurpers who owned the stalls. Behind their barrows, clothes and materials in garish colours hung suspended on strings from the pillars of Lutyens's arcade. In front of the travel agency seethed a miscellaneous mob, shopping, window-gazing, or unambitiously spending the day on the pavement.

At Cook's office Barry joined me, and we walked slowly towards the Parliament House where we were to hear the debate. This circular structure, a continuous open colonnade of cream-coloured sandstone surrounding its half-mile circumference, combined with Government House and the Secretariat to make an august group of central buildings with soaring campaniles and solid-looking domes. Government House, the former Viceregal Lodge which was now the residence of Governor-General Rajagopalachari, stood on the traditional spot where Tamerlane, the invader of fourteenth-century Delhi, had ordered the public massacre of 100,000 Hindus. Lord Hardinge, the father of New Delhi, had oddly regarded this historic place as an appropriate site for the Viceroy's palace. A processional road, the King's Way, joined Government House to the Secretariat buildings, an amalgamation of offices designed by Sir Herbert Baker. Round the main entrance ran a homiletic inscription.

"Liberty will not descend to a people. A people must raise themselves to liberty. It is a blessing that must be earned before it can be enjoyed."

This prophecy was now achieving fulfilment, but the process

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appeared to demand some peculiar details of executive action. The Secretariat was divided into a North and South block standing on either side of the parkway which began at the New Delhi Triumphal Arch ; each block had been surmounted by a dome, and each dome by an enormous stone crown. The crowns were now being enthusiastically but laboriously removed by ropes and pulleys in time for the celebration of the Indian Republic on 26th January, 1950.

A similar gold-plated bronze crown had already been removed after four days' labour from the dome of the Constituent Assembly, where Asoka's lions were scheduled to replace it, but as each monarchical symbol weighed between 500 lb. and two tons, the task of disposal was formidable. Monuments and statues of British dignitaries, including King George V and several Viceroy, still stood all over New Delhi, but the Municipal Council had officially decided to leave them alone for the present. As it was, the administration suffered constant attack for its expenditure from a few persistent critics.

One of these, J. C. Kumarappa, President of the All-India Village Industries Association and author of *Gandhian Economics*, I had met at Santiniketan and was to meet again at Sevagram. During the Santiniketan discussions, Kumarappa had caused some embarrassment by announcing that if Mr. Nehru came to Sevagram with a military guard he would feel compelled to quit the Conference. In the June 1949 issue of his monthly magazine, *Gram Udyog Patrika*, he had protested in true Gandhian fashion against official extravagance :

“ A symbol of this splendour at the cost of the poor man at the moment is the great city of Delhi itself. In it the palace of the first citizen is one that will put into shade the pomp of the Great Moghuls. . . . It is not as though this tradition was bequeathed to us. Even during the days of the British Viceroy, these extravagances had never reached these heights . . . India is like a beggar in tattered garments sporting a carnation in his button-hole ! ”

Inside the Parliament House we found that three separate Chambers—one for the Legislative Assembly, another for the Council of State, and a third formerly used for the Princes' Council—radiated from the central lobby. As a group of

delegates to the Gandhi Conferences we had been given tickets for the Legislative Assembly, but these were normally difficult to obtain. The Indian tendency to regard long speeches as an enjoyable form of public entertainment made the Assembly as popular as a modern cinema.

Outside the door into the Distinguished Visitors' Gallery stood a table on which a placard ordered us to deposit any brief-cases, handbags, umbrellas or sticks that we happened to be carrying. I left behind with some misgivings a light-grey handbag containing my passport, tickets, money and traveller's cheques, but everything was there intact when the session ended.

The Assembly was popularly if unoriginally known as "the Monkey House" and "the Gas Works." The galleries surrounding it formed part of a continuous balcony divided by hand-rails. A section above the Speaker's chair was reserved for the Press; the Speaker's Gallery extended to his left. Still further to the left stretched the Visitors' Gallery, the largest of the various divisions. To the right of the Speaker were the Distinguished Visitors' Gallery, and the Women's Gallery for the wives and daughters of politicians.

Those Members who had not adopted Western dress wore homespun *khaddi*; its uniform grey gave the Assembly a drab appearance, relieved only by the coloured sarees of the few women. The circular rows of desks, each equipped with a microphone which the Members seldom used, faced the Chair of the Speaker, Mr. Mavalankar. Debates and question periods were conducted in English, the only language universally understood.

The Prime Minister, wearing a white Gandhi cap, occupied his desk near the Speaker; beside him, stocky and tough, sat the seventy-five-year-old Deputy Premier, Sardar Vallabhbhai Jhaverabhai Patel, long known to Members of Congress as "the boss." Patel's deeply-lined face now showed clear signs of his age. His death, on 15th December, 1950, was to leave Jawaharlal Nehru alone of the "Big Three" to whom the Congress and people of India had looked to carry the burden of leadership.

The two men exchanged no word during the debate. I had heard whispers of vital disagreements between them, but Nehru himself deplored such rumours, and in a broadcast soon after Gandhi's death had referred generously to Patel.

"Of course there have been for many years past differences

between us, temperamental and other, in regard to many problems. But India at least should know that these differences have been over-shadowed by fundamental agreements about the most important aspects of our public life and that we have cooperated for a quarter of a century and more in great undertakings."

Among the remaining Ministers Hindus were in a majority, but Muslims, Sikhs and Christians also sat in the Chamber. Other Members represented still smaller minorities, such as the Parsees, Anglo-Indians, and Harijans or "Untouchables," whom Gandhi had re-named "Children of God." These groups provided a necessary source of criticism, but all together did not add up to an official Opposition. No prospect seemed to exist of a strong Communist Party. The Communists, as usual very active in proportion to their numbers, were reduced to a policy of sabotage; they had therefore become the objects of near-authoritarian legislation. The imprisonment of some Communists without trial was to inspire several questions to Dr. Rajendra Prasad at the Sevagram Conference.

The single-party Government of the Congress, committed to freedom of worship and the development of a secular State, seemed to be safely established for years to come. Though effective competition was lacking the debates had a vital, intoxicating quality, as though each Member remained perpetually aware that he or she was making all things new.

In the issue of his paper *Harijan* for 21st June, 1942, Gandhi had suggested the policy which he thought that the Government of a free India should follow.

"What policy the National Government will adopt I cannot say. I may not even survive it, much as I would love to. If I do, I would advise the adoption of non-violence to the utmost extent possible, and that will be India's great contribution to the peace of the world and the establishment of a new world order. I expect that with the existence of so many martial races in India, all of whom will have a voice in the Government of the day, the national policy will incline towards militarism of a modified character. I shall certainly hope that all the effort of the past twenty-two years to show the efficacy of non-violence as a political force will not have gone in vain, and a strong party representing true non-violence will exist in the country."

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Gandhi's hopes had not been fulfilled. Though a "moral reservoir" both wide and deep remained from his teaching, no Gandhi Party existed in India; most of his followers appeared to be distributed among the villages, doing social work or intervening in local politics. As yet they had formed no dynamic or united national policy; the Indo-Pakistan dispute, in which they would have been effective under Gandhi's leadership, had found them without resource. Social service on the lines set out in Gandhi's "Constructive Programme" even appeared to offer a welcome escape from harsh political realities.

For Gandhi himself such a dichotomy had been inconceivable; the social transformation which he saw as the condition of a new world order had always been undertaken side by side with an immediate political objective, whether Indian independence or Hindu-Muslim unity. But some of his friends have pointed in their writings to his growing separation from Congress after the attainment of independence.

The purpose of his last mission, in Noakhali and Calcutta, had been Hindu-Muslim reconciliation. It was widely misunderstood and led to his assassination, a recognised threat to which his attitude reflected the teaching of the *Gita*: "You must perform every action sacramentally, and be free from all attachment to results." Throughout that last endeavour a feeling of aloneness had come upon him; he worked as an individual, and no longer through Congress with which he had always cooperated during the struggle for independence. He gained in stature, but India lost. The now widening rift between his policy and that of the Indian Government had thus begun before he died.

This breach was not revealed by the Government-sponsored Hindu Code Bill, which was designed to remove surviving anomalies in the status of Indian women after their precipitate entry into politics and professions. In his writings Gandhi had protested against every custom which prolonged women's subjection, such as enforced widowhood, child marriage, polygamy, prostitution, and the purdah system.

Gandhi regarded women as morally superior to men, though physically weaker; they were, he said, "more fitted than man to make explorations and take bolder action in *Ahimsa*." The awakening of India's women sprang from the opportunities for non-violent action which he gave them in the struggle for

independence. They came in their hundreds from sheltered homes, went to prison with the men, and suffered beside them on equal terms. At one stride India's upper and middle-class women crossed the gulf through which the women of the West had been floundering for a century and a half ; to liberated India they contributed a Provincial Governor, a Minister of Health, and the Indian Ambassador to Washington.

"If only," Gandhi had said, "women will forget that they belong to the weaker sex, I have no doubt that they can do infinitely more than men against war . . . If Europe will drink in the lesson of non-violence it will do so through its women. . . . In my opinion she (woman) should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality."

This was exactly what the Hindu Code Bill set out to do. The opposition to it came from those families and Members whose feet were most firmly planted amid the roots of ancestral tradition. Its more controversial clauses sought to secure equal rights for women in marriage, divorce, and the ownership of property.

The idea which inspired this Bill was not new ; progressive Indian leaders had long visualised a common national legal code which would operate irrespective of caste and creed. The Rau Committee set up in 1944 had undertaken to codify Hindu law, and now submitted their Report as part of the Bill. The debate arose from a motion by Dr. Ambedkar, Law Minister and the first representative of the depressed classes in the Government, to consider the Select Committee's Report.

Premier Nehru, cheered by his supporters, stood up to open the discussion. Leaning over his desk set sideways to the Speaker's Chair he faced us as he spoke, graceful as an actor, resting informally on his hands. His speech, like all his addresses, was direct and unhistrionic ; he relied upon clarity of thought and elegance of phrase rather than on florid gestures and vocal effects.

"We have had a fairly prolonged debate on this Bill," he began. "I do submit that having considered all the discussion and debate we have gone through, this is a reasonable proposal which should meet with the approval of all sections of the House, because it is a real attempt on the part of the Government to carry something through this House and through the country with the largest measure of support. . . ."

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Nehru was near his sixtieth birthday ; he would soon enter the decade regarded by the short-lived Indians as the " forest " of life, which few expected to cross in safety. " If perchance a man attains sixty," *Harijan* commented later on the birthday itself, " not much hope is entertained about his being able to reach seventy, and so the sixtieth birthday becomes a ' diamond ' day. There is a saying ' sixty means senility.' These are indications of the poverty and physical and mental breakdown of our people as a nation."

No one could have appeared further from " senility " than the Harrow-educated Kashmiri Brahmin with the handsome aristocratic profile and sombre dark eyes upon whom the burden of Gandhi's popularity had fallen. Years in prison, for which he now appeared to feel no resentment against the British who put him there, had passed over him without leaving any visible trace. A constant ebb and flow of impatience, reaching irritability in the presence of fools and sycophants, never eclipsed a dominant charm which retained the effervescence and exhibitionism of youth. It had also survived an immense capacity for serious work which the shortage of men and women fit to govern India had taxed to the limit.

In his speech at Lucknow University, Nehru had described as his chief perplexity the task of finding colleagues equal to the challenge of their time. India, he said, had suffered from arrested development for two hundred years ; the alien rule imposed from without had prevented the normal adjustment of social relations and the appropriate solution of national problems. After the British withdrew, those problems demanded attention at the very time when the world was recovering from a disastrous war and the partition of India had divided the experts. He asked his critics to remember the immensity of these dilemmas, for the critics, like the dilemmas, were many. Prominent among them was J. C. Kumarappa, who in one of his articles had presented Nehru as a dual personality preaching peace abroad and organising war at home.

A British Member of Parliament with some knowledge of India shared Kumarappa's view ; at the London reception where I met him after I had returned home, he announced that he was sceptical of Nehru's " idealism."

" Of course he gives lip-service to Gandhi's ideas, and no



doubt he feels a theoretical respect for them. But has he any intention whatever of carrying them out?" The smile and shrug which accompanied the question declared this practical realist's belief that only naïveté itself would answer yes.

"Have you read his latest volume of speeches, *Independence and After*?" I inquired. As I had expected, my acquaintance answered no.

The judgment of these sceptics was subsequently confirmed by Nehru's offer to mediate in the Korean war before he had settled the Kashmir dispute, and a number of London newspapers took the same view. The expectation of absolute consistency in others is a common human weakness.

In the Legislative Assembly, Nehru finished his speech to the sound of applause.

"We have achieved political freedom and political independence. That is a stage in the journey. There are other stages, economic, social and others. And if a society is to advance, there must be this integrated advance on all fronts. Advance on one front and being kept back on other fronts means conflicts, and means that the first advance also is endangered."

He hoped, he said, that the consideration motion might be passed, so that the Bill would have the support of a very large majority in the next session.

During the discussion which followed, the Speaker reminded the House that this stage of the motion had already been debated for nine days, occupying thirty-three speakers for over thirty hours. The codification of Hindu law, like the extension of the franchise to women in Britain, appeared to be one of those measures with which successive governments contend for decades, until a moment comes when the opposition suddenly collapses and no one can remember why it ever existed. Judging by the interruptions which assailed the Law Minister during his reply to the debate, the reactionary opposition to the Bill had not yet reached this stage. Though the representatives of tradition made the most of their opportunities, Dr. Ambedkar's motion was carried soon after midday with only eleven adverse votes. But it was evident that neither India nor the outside world had heard the last of the Hindu Code.

A luncheon in the Parliament dining-room, given by two women Members, Mrs. Ray and Mrs. Sen, succeeded the

debate; at this I was the only British guest. Acharya J. B. Kripalani, beside whom I sat, acted as host; I had met him again at a tea-party held in his house the previous day. Before lunch he procured me a printed copy of the Hindu Code Bill; as I ate curry and sipped a rose-flavoured fruit drink, he explained the implications of the debate that we had heard.

His conversation, like a meeting of the Delhi Branch of the All-India Women's Conference later in the afternoon, illuminated those aspects of India's darkness for which the High Commissioner in London had prepared the British delegates. Progress might have been fast for the few, but how could it reach the mass of over-burdened child-bearing women when only one nurse existed for every 56,000 people, and one Health Visitor for every 350,000? Throughout the country, with its vast area and population, less than a thousand maternity and child welfare centres served India's mothers and children. The All-India Women's Conference, like the Hindu Code Bill, faced the task of raising the status of women which was the first answer to their gigantic needs.

That evening, after lecturing at Delhi University, I listened in another room of the same building to a session of the Indo-American Conference; its members were discussing how much more cordially Indian students were received in America than in Britain. The next day, Kamaladevi had told me, Mr. Nehru was holding a reception at the Prime Minister's house for the delegates to this Conference. When I returned to Hardinge Avenue, I found that I too had received an invitation.

## X—THE LESSON OF DELHI

“ I claim to be a humble disciple of India and humanity and would like to die in the discharge of such service. . . . My patriotism is for me a stage of my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace.”

M. K. Gandhi.

“ A politician has to deal not only with the truth, but with men’s receptivity of that truth, because if there is not sufficient response to it, that truth is banished into the wilderness till minds are ripe for it . . . Perhaps there is no final solution of these conflicts except to try continuously to bridge the gulf between the idealism and the practice which is forced on us by circumstances.”

Jawaharlal Nehru.

Speech to Constituent Assembly at New  
Delhi, 8th March, 1949.

ON THE DAY of the Hindu Code Bill debate, Amiya Chakravarty came into Delhi from Lahore ; he had been to Pakistan on a private mission. When I met him outside the Parliament House, he suggested that we might visit together the scene of Gandhi’s assassination at Birla House.

With our memories of mutual friends loved and lost, it was an appropriate pilgrimage. Dodging other delegates contemplating the same errand, we took possession of an official car and left it outside Birla House. The ochre-coloured modern mansion with its crimson-painted shutters seemed an incongruous setting for the tragedy which had occurred there. It recalled discussions at Santiniketan in which zealous Socialists from the ends of the earth had put persistent questions to Gandhi’s disciples on his friendships with millionaires. These friendships had not seemed so strange to me ; no doubt the Mahatma reflected, with Jesus Christ, that the rich enter hardly into the Kingdom of Heaven, and are more in need of salvation than the poor with nothing to lose who creep through the gate.

What did surprise me was the continued use of Birla House as a private residence ; I had expected to find a national shrine or

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museum. Why had this prosperous financier not given to India his home and garden which had witnessed a human Calvary? Future generations might well come to regard them as second in their significance only to the scene at the Cross. Would a wealthy follower of Jesus have maintained a household in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Gently Amiya intimated that India was asking similar questions.

"We shall have to walk round to the other entrance," he said. "The part of the garden where Gandhiji was killed has been railed off, so that people who want to see it can come and go without walking through the grounds."

Gandhi's last meeting had been held on an oblong lawn, slightly raised like a tennis lawn and of similar size. Near the centre a small square of concrete marked the place that we had come to see. Upon the concrete lay a fading heap of African marigolds.

We stood there in silence, divided from the rest of the garden by a shrubbery which surrounded the prayer-ground on three sides. Marigolds and bougainvillea lent their rich shades of orange and flame to the sombre bushes. As we watched, a continuous procession of humble devotees came in and out of the garden, bringing handfuls of marigolds to leave on the slab as though it were a tomb. I gathered a marigold from the shrubbery, and afterwards placed it in my autographed volume of Nehru's speeches.

Amiya showed me a door at the back of Birla House, which opened on to a red paved path running through the garden and skirting the lawn.

"From there," he said, "Gandhiji came, and walked along the path to his last meeting." He pointed to another door, painted crimson beneath a green temple-shaped roof. "That room at the side is where he kept his books and papers."

To this garden also, at 5.10 p.m. on the evening of 30th January, 1948, had come Nathuram Vinayak Godse, a member of the Hindu Mahasabha, and editor of the extremist Poona paper, *Hindu Rashtra*. He too had mounted the low steps to the lawn, and a moment later heard the cry to God: "Ai Ram! Ai Ram!" which Gandhi had uttered at the first shock of the murderer's assault.

"Whatever a man remembers at the last, when he is leaving

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the body," says the *Gita*, "will be remembered by him in the hereafter; because that will be what his mind has most constantly dwelt on, during this life."

Gandhi had fallen with his hand raised above his head in the salutation of peace with which he had greeted his assassin. He had intended to return to Sevagram a few days later; instead, he was carried into the house, and after twenty-eight minutes, died there. His last gesture had conveyed absolution to Godse.

In a booklet on Capital Punishment published by the Bombay Theosophists which I read a few weeks later, some words by Gandhi were quoted which applied prophetically to the problem raised by the fate of his murderer.

"In Independent India of the non-violent type, there will be crime but no criminals. They will not be punished. Crime is a disease like any other malady and is a product of the prevalent social system. Therefore, all crime, including murder, will be treated as a disease. Whether such an India will ever come into being is another question."

It was a question already being answered in a way that Gandhi would have deplored. When the first group of delegates to the World Conference arrived at Bombay in November, they learned that Godse had just been tried and sentenced to death. Many of them knew Gandhi's views on capital punishment; they raised a fund and sent one of their number, Richard Gregg, the American author of *The Power of Non-Violence*, by air to Delhi to plead that Gandhi's assassin should not be punished by judicial murder. Though Richard Gregg was well known in Delhi, his intervention failed, and Godse was executed.

"Is it not strange," Jawaharlal Nehru had said in a broadcast soon after his American tour, "that we in India whose respect abroad is solely because of Mahatma Gandhi, apart from paying lip-service to the Father of the Nation do not always follow his teaching in practice?"

Had Nehru gone away sorrowful from that interview with Richard Gregg, like the young man in the Gospel who had great possessions?

In the garden of Birla House, Amiya Chakravarty went on talking quietly.

"I was with him two hours before he was shot. He asked me to go to Lahore, on a mission to help the abducted women. It

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was there I heard the news . . . I came back at once, and when I arrived I could hardly get into the house. All round it was a great sea of people, stretching in every direction."

The follower of Gandhi who had briefly announced to that crowd: "Bapuji—our father—is dead," had spoken with less conscious effect than the friend who reported the death of Abraham Lincoln: "Now he belongs to the ages." But in that garden, sanctified by tragedy in spite of the suburban magnificence which engulfed the prayer-ground, it seemed clear that Gandhi belonged to them too, and always would. In Nehru's words, "he entered into the very stuff of our minds and spirits and changed and moulded them . . . and the strength he gave us was not for a moment or a day or a year but it was something added on to our national inheritance."

Only a fortnight before his death, Gandhi had made a prophetic entry in his Delhi Diary.

"Before I ever knew anything of politics in my early youth, I dreamt the dream of communal unity of the heart. I shall jump, in the evening of my life, like a child, to feel that the dream has been realised in this life. . . . Who would not risk sacrificing his life for the realisation of such a dream?"

For some time Gandhi had known the risks that attended his revolutionary policy. A forecast more strange than his own words was that of Tagore's poem, *Victory to Victim*, with its debt to James Shirley's *The Glories of our Blood and State*:

"Upon Death's purple altar now  
See where the victor-victim bleeds!"

Tagore's first stanza describes "the Man of faith" who "moves on along pitiless paths strewn with flints over scorching sands and steep mountainous tracks." The poem continues:

"Someone from the crowd suddenly stands up  
and pointing to the leader with merciless finger  
breaks out:  
'False prophet, thou hast deceived us!'  
Others take up the cry one by one,  
women hiss their hatred and men growl.  
At last one bolder than others suddenly deals him a  
blow.

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They cannot see his face, but fall upon him in a fury  
of destruction  
and hit him till he lies prone upon the ground his  
life extinct.

“ Suddenly they become still and gasp for breath as they  
gaze at the figure lying dead.

The women sob out loud and men hide their faces in  
their hands.

A few try to slink away unnoticed,  
but their crime keeps them chained  
to their victim.

They ask each other in bewilderment,  
‘ Who will show us the path ? ’

“ The old man from the East bends his head and says :  
‘ The Victim.’

They sit still and silent.

Again speaks the old man.

‘ We refused him in doubt, we killed him in anger,  
now we shall accept him in love,  
for in his death he lives in the life of us all, the  
great Victim.’

And they all stand up and mingle their voices and sing,  
‘ Victory to the Victim ! ’ ”

From the shock given to Gandhi's admirers by his murder, some contrasting impressions have remained. John Haynes Holmes, the minister of the Community Church in New York, has described the “ burning sense of supreme irony ” left with him by the event. But Sir Savapalli Radhakrishnan, the Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford, who became India's Ambassador to Moscow, reached a conclusion similar in spirit to Tagore's poem. In an address to his College two days after Gandhi's death, he expressed his belief that assassination had given a “ classical ending ” to the Mahatma's life.

Nathuram Vinayak Godse, the already forgotten Hindu extremist, may have been the instrument of an historic immortality comparable to that of Socrates and Jesus. Such a death was not an irony but an apotheosis. In terms of atonement for the sins of others, it added the halo of martyrdom to the saint's achievement.

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The prayer-ground was very quiet ; Amiya, though he had work to do in Delhi, seemed ready to remain indefinitely. Who and what, I meditated, had he really been, the grotesque little man of God who suffered crucifixion in this unlikeliest of all places, a millionaire's garden ? Beside the sombre poetry of Nehru's threnody, broadcast to the world immediately after the assassination, I set Kripalani's honest and ironic picture of Gandhi the man. Mentally I tried to distinguish and yet combine the two ; the Father and Leader of Nehru's eloquence, the prophet who was already qualifying, in the eyes of the worshipping millions, for elevation to a high rank among India's many gods ; and the shrewd unpoetic politician, with his proletarian wit and the blatant inconsistencies of a practical pioneer.

Wherever the truth might lie, he had made the West conscious of India's struggle, traceable through two thousand years of recorded history, to lift mankind to a moral and spiritual grandeur purged from the restlessness of ambition and the fretful chafing of the senses. Louis Renou has written that Gandhi, as the contemporary of the dictators, was a modern miracle. It is one which recalls that older miracle, the survival of Christ's authority over the Imperial power of Rome.

Through Gandhi India had learned to regard ethical conduct as part of the endeavour by which man frees himself from sin, and to reassert her noblest tradition which accepted love and compassion as essential to that conduct. He achieved a synthesis of religion and morality in which moral behaviour and non-violence became not only part, but the chief part, of religion itself.

Later that day Amiya completed our pilgrimage by taking me to the place of Gandhi's cremation, the Raj Ghat beside the Jumna River. Together we walked across the meadows which lie east of the Red Fort and the Jama Masjid in the city of Old Delhi.

It was now the week before Christmas, six weeks earlier in the season than that last day of January when Gandhi's body was brought there. During this dry period the river, as at Agra, had narrowed ; the shallow platform above a short flight of steps which marked the place where his ashes were strewn on the sacred water now looked over grass.

In the late afternoon of 31st January, 1948, the cremation had



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taken place. Some of Gandhi's friends had proposed that his body should be embalmed for a few days, so that the multitudes who desired to pay their final homage could come from all parts of India. But this was contrary to the Mahatma's expressed wish, and the ceremony, by Nehru's orders, was carried out on the Saturday. In the forenoon the bier left Birla House, and the procession followed a scheduled route to the river.

Throughout the previous night, the inhabitants of towns and villages within reach had trekked towards Delhi in every type of vehicle, until by daybreak over a million men and women of many races, nationalities, and creeds stretched for miles along the river bank. Towards the time set for the cremation, the Mountbattens joined them without display; the Earl was the first and last Viceroy to witness a great national ceremony sitting on the ground. In other parts of India, the people went at the time appointed for the cremation to the sea or nearest river, and there prayed. For them, as for the citizens of Delhi, it was a day of fasting; they shared with Nehru the shame he was to express, as the head of India's Government, "that we should have failed to protect the greatest treasure that we possessed."

On a square platform which had preceded the one where we stood, Gandhi's bier, decked with garlands of oleander and white jasmine, had lain fifteen feet above the river's edge. The platform was strewn with sandalwood and covered with the national colours, white, yellow and green. At 4.45, as the multitudes stood in silence, the pyre was lighted and the flames shot high into the air. When the body had been consumed, the ashes were divided into fifty portions to be taken to sacred waters in different parts of India. On 12th February, the chief funeral procession went to the junction of the Jumna and the Ganges at Allahabad.

The world's homage had been a shocked confession of wrongdoing in the face of Gandhi's sacrifice. Yet, as Aldous Huxley has recorded, his body was borne to the pyre on a weapons carrier. Detachments of soldiers and police, with tanks and armoured cars, took part in the funeral procession. Fighters of the Indian Air Force circled overhead; the rose-petals which fell on Gandhi's bier were dropped by army planes.

"All these instruments of violent coercion," writes Huxley, "were paraded in honour of the apostle of non-violence and soul-force. It was an inevitable irony; for, by definition, a

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nation is a sovereign community possessing the means to make war on other sovereign communities."

Where was Gandhi now? Amiya, I suspected, was asking, like myself, that unspoken and unanswerable question. The Hindu Heaven has been a subject of many interpretations. Ancient Aryans cherished a belief that their saints "shone like constellations, being forms of light in the sky." There the Hindus, like unscientific Christians, usually placed their Here-after, though one primitive conception assigned it to the northern flank of the Himalayas, "where in a pure and happy land good men are reborn." Their state, in words reminiscent of the Book of Revelation, was said to be one in which "there is neither hunger nor thirst nor weariness nor old age nor sin." Closer to the Gandhian ideal was the later concept of life in and with God, incarnate Virtue and perfect righteousness embodied in Absolute Being.

Amiya's gentle voice broke into my meditations.

"Let us go over to the Jama Masjid. I will show you where the riots occurred in 1947."

From their raised position on a rocky hill, the domes and minarets of Shahjahan's great mosque, an Indo-Saracenic monument, commanded the river and meadows. Like the Agra and Delhi Forts, the Jama Masjid was built of white marble and red sandstone. Crossing the stretch of grass to the Old City, we walked up one of the long flights of stone steps which led to the three gateways.

This mosque, with the large bazaar and narrow by-ways surrounding it, had been for centuries the Muslim centre of Delhi. Right up to the sacred entrance and between the flights of steps the salesmen had set their booths, selling the usual fabrics together with brass-ware, embroidered muslins, and gold and silver tinsel evening slippers. Amiya purchased two long braids of black wool threaded through gold rings which Muslim women plait into their hair, and gave them to me as a souvenir.

"Here," he told me with melancholy impartiality, "much of the killing took place. The quarter was crowded, because from the beginning of September assaults on Muslims had been going on all over Delhi, and families came here for protection. At last refugee camps were put up for them in the old Fort, and round the Jama Masjid and Humayun's Tomb."

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From newspapers read at the time, I had learned that the attacks on Muslims were engineered chiefly by the Hindu Rashtrya Swayamsewak Sangh, the extremist organisation which had employed large gangs of Sikhs armed with modern weapons.

"Did the massacres last all the autumn?" I asked Amiya.

"They were worst in September. After that there were periodic outbreaks, even after Gandhiji's final fast. But when he was killed, they ceased at once. They stopped because everyone knew he had died for Hindu-Muslim peace."

From the steps of the Jama Masjid I looked back across the meadows, where the unpretentious Raj Ghat symbolised that ultimate sacrifice. The *Gita*, it seemed, had as usual the last word :

"The man of faith  
Whose heart is devoted,  
Whose senses are mastered :  
He finds Brahman.  
Enlightened, he passes  
At once to the highest,  
'The peace beyond passion."

At the Prime Minister's reception that evening I met Amiya again. Not only had he arranged, with characteristic generosity, to take me out to dinner when the function was over ; he had also brought me a present. This gift was the newly-published volume of Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches, *Independence and After*.

"Ask him to autograph it for you," suggested Amiya.

On the other side of the large room, decorated with exotic flowers by Nehru's Swedish housekeeper, stood the Prime Minister, with his married only daughter, Indira Gandhi, acting as hostess. When I had shaken hands with him in the long cavalcade of guests he had clearly not recognised me, and now the floor between us was crowded with delegates to the Indo-American Conference.

"Oh, I can't !" I exclaimed. "Look how busy he is !"

But Amiya was mildly insistent.

"You must ask him," he repeated. "He will be pleased. He likes signing his books. I will come as well."

With a pertinacity unexpected in one so courteous, Amiya propelled me through the crowd. In front of Nehru, Kamaladevi

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*joined us; the invitation had been sent to me at her request.*

"This is Vera Brittain," she said to the Prime Minister. "I think you know her."

"She wants you to sign a book for her," prompted Amiya.

Conquering diffidence with an effort, I held out the volume of speeches.

"Once," I said, "you signed a portrait of Jefferson for my husband at our house in Chelsea. Will you sign this for me?"

Nehru's melancholy eyes lit up with a flash of recollection.

"Yes . . . I remember. Of course I'll sign it for you."

He pulled out a pen, and wrote his name—"Jawaharlal Nehru. December 1949" in large bold characters across the flyleaf. Two days afterwards, at my request, Amiya modestly added his own signature in small fine handwriting at the foot of the page. "Greetings from India. Amiya Chakravarty—22.12.49."

The Prime Minister showed no immediate impulse to get rid of me.

"I came across some studies of Jefferson in America," he said. "And I brought back a cast of Abraham Lincoln's hands. They typify both strength and gentleness."

"And that is the model for your own policy?"

He smiled benevolently. At that moment a Press photographer snapped us, catching me with a tea-cup in my hand, the signed volume of speeches under my arm, and an idiotic grin on my face. This picture of Nehru and myself in conversation went all over India. It caught his amiable expression, but was otherwise hardly more flattering to him than to me.

"If you will come with me for a moment," he went on, "I should like to show you something."

I followed him away from the reception into a private sitting-room, which resembled a woman's boudoir rather than a Minister's study. It was decorated with large vases of the same delicate pink flowers, like patterned lace, that I had seen in the public room. Their name was unknown to me, but they suggested an uncommon variety of spirea.

"Look!" he said, and pointed to a picture on the wall. It was an arresting portrait of Gandhi, painted in dark intense colours by an Hungarian artist. Only the eyes stood out, acute and discerning; they appeared to follow us round the room.

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On a seat below the picture, cushions in the same deep shades emphasised its effect.

Nehru appeared to be in no hurry to return to the party. We remained in his room, talking and looking at the portrait, for perhaps five minutes; then he took me back and showed me several photographs of Gandhi and himself which adorned the reception chamber. They were taken, he said, by a young Press photographer who was present that evening; he had ordered them to be enlarged and hung owing to their excellent likenesses. He introduced me to the photographer, and rejoined his guests.

At Maiden's Hotel, after the long drive from New to Old Delhi, I became suddenly conscious of overwhelming fatigue. In India, it seemed, a visitor from the West alternated between vehement stimulus and abysmal exhaustion; the country, like its climate, was a study in extremes. Already my English skin was dried by the hot midday sun, but the northern nights were now so cold that I had to pile such limited heavy clothing as I possessed on the top of my bed.

I shook myself out of the fatigue when Amiya introduced me to his chief guest, a tall man named Nuri who wore the grey-green, uniform-like dress which seemed to be popular with Indian diplomats. Mr. Nuri, it appeared, had been an Oxford undergraduate two or three years earlier than myself, and had later acted as a roving ambassador in the Middle East. For some reason unknown to myself, his interest was keenly aroused by my proposed visit to Pakistan. From the dinner-table conversation, three items of advice emerged:

First, ask the Pakistanis what purpose they think will be served by continued hostility. Secondly, assure them that India will never wage war in Kashmir unless they attack it first. Thirdly, find out what part the British in Pakistan are playing.

I had experienced too many defensive wars to be wholly convinced by Point Two, but I mentally noted the third. Later, in Karachi, I inquired discreetly into the preoccupations of the British still living in Pakistan, but made no sinister discoveries. This remnant of the Imperial entourage appeared to consist largely of modest, apprehensive individuals, who had lost their posts as civil servants or army officers, and were postponing the uncomfortable experience of falling back, unwanted by any foreign country, upon the highly competitive home market.

. . . . .

### *Search After Sunrise*

During our week in Delhi Barry and I, with several others, had promised to visit Kamaladevi's cooperative farm for refugees. On our way there we passed one of India's most famous attractions for tourists, the gigantic minaret begun in A.D. 1200 by Kutab-ud-din-Aibek. Like Aurangzeb in Benares five centuries later, the founder of the Slave Dynasty had built this great monument upon the ruins of an ancient Hindu temple after he had overthrown the Maharajah of Dilli, Prithvi Raj.

Getting out of the car we consulted a guide-book, which told us that the Kutab Minar—which Hindus prefer to call the Prithvi Lat—was known as the seventh architectural wonder of Hindustan. For eight and a half centuries the terra-cotta minaret, resembling a huge frilled and pleated candlestick owing to the five surrounding balconies which broke the honeycomb lines of the stone, had towered unimpaired above the Delhi plain. Large Arabic letters representing verses from the Koran were inscribed on the durable red sandstone which composed its base.

Near by an even more ancient and mysterious survival demanded a moment's inspection. Standing twenty-four feet high and reputedly built 1,600 years earlier by a Hindu king named Chandra, we saw a solid pillar of unrusting iron inscribed with six lines of Sanskrit in ancient Devnaagri hieroglyphics. Experts, it seemed, had disputed the translation and hence the date, but according to one of them the manufacture of wrought iron in India had reached perfection 2,500 years ago. The pillar remained as a permanent memorial to India's technical knowledge at a time when her future conquerors were savages fighting for survival in primitive forests.

A dozen miles from Delhi we reached the dusty track leading to Kamaladevi's cooperative farm. As the car left the main road and bumped deliriously through a mile of deep sand, I realised in practical fashion the relationship between transport and the industrial development which the Nehru Government had decided that India must have. So far it had shown little inclination to endorse Gandhi's belief that India should be kept rural and decentralised. This repudiation of his economic system appeared to cause less remorse and misgiving than expenditure on "defence" against Pakistan.

"We did not adopt Gandhi's views wholly, either in regard

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to non-violence or in regard to economics," Nehru had admitted to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce. He had made the same point more emphatically at Lucknow. "We are bound to be industrialised, we are trying to be industrialised, we want to be industrialised—greater wealth, greater production."

Industrialisation, like other developments, depended upon roads. Indian railways connected only key points; throughout rural India, supply and distribution were handicapped by poor communications. Without them the domestic market could not expand, and village standards of living could not rise. Indefinite miles of concrete road awaited the diversion of funds from military budgets. India had no asphalt; and metalled roads could sustain neither weighty lorries nor violent monsoons.

The sandy track ended at a small concentration of mud-huts, and the car stopped in a swirl of dust. Heads popped over walls; dark eyes peered out of dusky faces with impassive curiosity. These Hindu refugees from Pakistan were amongst the quarter-million who had received land allotments for rehabilitation. This particular allotment had been deserted by its Muslim inhabitants, who had fled into Pakistan. The communal change-over was typical of many villages in both countries.

Kamaladevi, an economist herself, had perceived how the refugees might help to solve India's food problem; her co-operative farm, she hoped, would lead to the establishment of others. Hunger, starvation, the dread of famine, still overshadowed this land of immense unutilised wealth. The great irrigation schemes for releasing the power concentrated in the Himalayas, such as the Damodar Valley Plan already accepted by the Legislature, would meet India's basic needs when release from political tension unlocked the necessary funds. Meanwhile the refugees, like others, must eat.

Through dust and stubble, we tramped from the village to the farm. The sun was now high; having omitted in the usual rush of engagements to bring a hat, I was obliged to shield my head with the light coat I carried while Walter Zander, the Jewish delegate who walked beside me, took charge of my handbag. Reacting against the solar topees worn in the past by severe British dowagers, Western women had ceased to use hats except in direct sunshine.

At the farm a primitive irrigation system had been started in

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a thin grove of mangoes. After looking at the open channels and watching a blindfolded camel turn the wheel that worked the well, we started back to the village across the rough ground. Barry, completely happy on any farm, disdained my objections to the short stubbly spikes which tore my stockings and cut my feet.

"Why didn't you put on a proper pair of shoes?" he demanded, looking derisively at the red suède rope-soled sandals, with open toes and no heels, which I had bought at a Bata shop in Calcutta.

"What's wrong with these shoes?" I inquired.

"Oh, nothing. They're quite nice shoes. But they aren't suitable for walking through stubble."

"I didn't know we were going to walk through stubble," I said crossly. "One doesn't usually wear heavy brogues with a thin silk dress."

The argument, having begun, continued in the car all the day back to Delhi. It soon left the innocuous subject of shoes for the more dangerous topic of communities versus private living.

"I've never believed in tucking one's self into a community," I said. "It's too much like saving one's own soul and letting everyone else go to hell in their own way."

"What about the ashrams in India?" asked Barry pertinently.

"They're not the same as the artificial, self-conscious modern communities we've been talking about. Ashrams have been part of India's social life for centuries, like the medieval monasteries were part of Europe's."

"If you live in human society on the same terms as other people you have to subscribe to their values," insisted Barry, defending his New Zealand Riverside Community in terms that I felt certain he always used. "You become part of the exploitation and violence which lead to war."

"I'm not so sure," I said. "The parable of the leaven always seems to me to be one of the most important in the Gospels. Doesn't it mean that a reformer's job is not to quit society, but to try to change it from within?"

"Christ didn't live in a capitalist civilisation," asserted Barry, as though that undoubted fact disposed of the problem. We were now passing the Kutab Minar again, but neither of us paid it the least attention.

"Of course He didn't, in the modern sense," I persisted.



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" But obviously there were a good many people around who had wealth to play with."

" Well, didn't He tell them to sell all they had and give it to the poor ? "

" Yes, He did. He knew it was hard for rich people like Birla to enter the Kingdom. But He didn't tell them to give up the struggle and isolate themselves in communities. It may be a non-violent form of escapism, but it's escapism just the same."

" You're the most obstinate woman I ever met ! " Barry burst out explosively. The obvious compromise of admitting both approaches to the problem of evil completely escaped us. By the time we reached Delhi we were so exasperated that the luncheon to which Rajkumari Amrit Kaur had invited the two of us and George Paine seemed likely to involve uncomfortable tension. My irritation was not subdued by the rush to change my clothes and remove the spikes from my feet as soon as we reached Hardinge Avenue, for as usual the drive had taken longer than anyone expected. Barry, glowering, waited on the verandah.

But the luncheon proved to be an entirely cathartic occasion. In her hospitable home in Wellington Square, Rajkumari appeared gracious, leisurely and unharassed. Actually she must have been much preoccupied, for she was about to leave by air to attend the celebration of the new Indonesian Republic. As always, she was the best official representative of both Nehru and Patel.

At luncheon I sat beside her brother, a medical man who urged on me the importance of avoiding both sunstrokes and infection. He was right about sunstrokes, I thought, remembering the uncomfortable walk round the farm ; this universal habit of hatlessness meant running a few risks. But as the possessor of a recent vaccination certificate I felt more confident about infection ; had I not also been inoculated before leaving England against typhoid, para-typhoid, cholera, and yellow fever ?

That afternoon some Members of the Legislative Assembly gave a reception at the Parliament House for the Conference delegates then in Delhi. After tea had been served in the Council of State Chamber, where the Upper House when elected would sit, a few of the guests were asked to address the Members. When I arrived, Wilfred Wellock was already speaking ; Henri

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Roser, Amiya, and one or two others followed him briefly. Some women Members tried to push me forward, but I shook my head ; one British delegate was enough. In that historic place each visitor hoped that he would be called upon to represent his country.

This by-play was not lost upon the Chairman, who chanced to be Acharya Kripalani. With the gesture of one accustomed to be obeyed, he summoned me to the rostrum.

“ Will Miss Brittain be good enough to come forward ? We want to hear her.”

The women Members clapped gleefully as I responded ; they realised that I was the first British woman to be invited to address representatives of the Legislative Assembly. I had prepared nothing and now felt permanently tired, but this was an occasion to which one rose if possible. In a few sentences I spoke of my attempts to get to India, explained why permission had been withheld for so long, and then recalled the struggle of British women for equality which recently, in that very building, had been joined by Indians. This reference to the Hindu Code Bill was roundly applauded.

“ You quite excelled yourself,” said Barry generously ; he had himself hoped to be asked to speak. Evidently he wants to make up for calling me obstinate, I thought. But what, if he was right, had provided the inspiration ? Was it the women Members, or Acharya Kripalani ?

At the end of the short meeting, Kripalani invited me to drive with him to his house, where the reception continued. Since time was less restricted here, the speeches were longer and more numerous ; we were able to meet our fellow guests only as they were leaving. Amongst them was Gandhi’s son Devadas, taller and less unworldly than his dedicated brother.

By the time that I was again asked to speak I had almost fallen asleep, but I awakened to the knowledge that I had still something to contribute. Describing my visit with Amiya to Birla House, I recalled that when I had stood at the place where Gandhi fell, it had been Acharya Kripalani’s human picture of him which had come into my mind. Gandhi had been a man, not a god ; the temptations which he had overcome were conquerable also by others. Would not a final reconciliation of the Hindu-Muslim tension be his best memorial ?

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"I beg you," I concluded, taking a chance, "not to forget him when you find yourselves in conflict with Pakistan."

Silence followed, and I wondered if this deliberate tactlessness had been too injudicious. Then Kripalani spoke, for once without irony.

"I could not be paid a greater compliment than to be told I have been able to evoke the living Gandhi. We shall try to remember him."

Someday, I hoped, as I sat writing on the veranda in Hardinge Avenue the following afternoon, I should meet Acharya Kripalani again; his engagements, he had said, would not permit him to come to Sevagram. I wished that he had a more responsible position in the Delhi Government, though I could understand why he had refrained from taking one. Each politician, and especially each follower of Gandhi, had his own difficult decision to make in relation to the spiritual struggle of which Delhi had become the scene.

The garden was very quiet, and for once I was alone. Kamaladevi, after taking me to the house of a political friend for lunch, had departed on an errand; she would return before the taxi came with the other delegates to carry me to the station for the journey to Wardha. I had refused to join them on a final sight-seeing expedition round Delhi; I wanted to write a long letter to my husband, to make a few notes, to reach some conclusions.

On a table beside me lay the Press picture, presented by the photographer, of the Prime Minister and myself in conversation; I was sending it to G. Contemplating this photograph, I pondered for some time on the enigma, Jawaharlal Nehru; the artist in words who paid tribute to Gandhi with so much more than his lips; the dreamer of dreams who had given a new vision of Asia to its submerged millions; the realistic, angry leader who appeared to revert to an old-type power-politician whenever Muslim domination threatened his ancestral home, Kashmir. It was not, I thought, really true that he preached peace abroad while organising war at home. Abroad he was free to say what he, the real Nehru, wanted for his country; in India he could go only so far as the Deputy-Premier and his following of Hindu nationalists would permit.

The conflict going on throughout India reached its height in Delhi. It was the immemorial conflict between good and evil;

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between the influences struggling to lead the reborn country in the direction that Gandhi had wished it to go, and those other forces, temporarily as powerful and always more strident, which sought to tread the narrow paths of communal hatred, and to steer India towards disintegration and violence.

A gulf, it was clear, had widened between Gandhi's principles and the policies of the Indian leaders, especially in the dispute with Pakistan. The Delhi Government reflected the universal dilemma of politicians trying to relate the aspirations that they cherished when out of office to the actual practice of power in a world wrecked by war and gripped by perpetual fear. "Power corrupts," but so do events; the chief problem of the modern world is that of translating ideals into action. It was a problem of which no one perceived the irony more clearly than Nehru himself.

"In our minds," he had said the previous March, "there was always this conflict, and feeling that we were hypocritical in talking about these great doctrines that Gandhi had taught us. We talked of Gandhi and then proved false to him at every step. . . . It is a curious thing that we who carried on the struggle for freedom in a non-violent and peaceful way should immediately have had to be confronted with violence of the intensest form. . . . The whole thing seemed to be a complete reversal of all that we stood for; and yet circumstances were such that I am quite convinced that we had no other way."

How hardly shall the leaders of a people remain the followers of a saint! That, for me, was the lesson of Delhi.

But it was an unfinished lesson. Inconsistently, perhaps, and with many failures, they have tried, and are trying, to be Gandhi's disciples. When Nehru, in the spring of 1950, invited Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan to Delhi and later visited him in Karachi, both Premiers risked their lives at the hands of communal fanatics just as Gandhi had risked and lost his. Something of Gandhi's strength had entered into them, and with it his refusal to listen to the clamour of hostile voices or to be afraid.

## XI—GANDHI'S ASHRAM

"He taught us the doctrine of non-violence, not as a passive submission to evil but as an active and positive instrument for the peaceful solution of international differences. He showed us that the human spirit is more powerful than the mightiest of armaments. He applied moral values to political action and pointed out that ends and means can never be separated, for the means ultimately govern the end."

Jawaharlal Nehru.

From a broadcast to the United States from  
New Delhi, 3rd April, 1948.

IN THE LATE afternoon of 22nd December, I left Delhi for the twenty-seven hours' journey to Wardha, in the Central Provinces, the nearest station to Gandhi's ashram at Sevagram where we were spending Christmas and continuing our Conference.

This time the fourth traveller in our compartment was Wilfred Wellock, the student of economic problems who had found reinforcement in Gandhi's Constructive Programme for his own belief in decentralisation. Wilfred did not agree with Nehru that India should be industrialised; he wanted to see a village system and a human economy. His chief purpose in coming to India was to visit the growing number of centres where social students were trained for pioneer work in village development, and to share his doctrines with them.

Wilfred, George and Barry plunged into a mutual exchange of opinions on Delhi, where they had all been conscious of that contrast between ideals and actions which Nehru himself had described as "hypocritical." At first I joined in the conversation, but soon felt too ill to continue. What particular germ among the many possibilities had I picked up, I wondered, remorsefully recalling the warnings of Rajkumari's brother. In order to spare our two septuagenarians the effort of climbing, I had volunteered to occupy a top berth and do the climbing myself. I did not then realise how much I should have to do.

By the faint glow of an almost exhausted flashlight, I sought in

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my suitcase for various remedies against infection. There they all were—the small flask of brandy, the tin of strong peppermints, the brown tablets made up by a London chemist. Throughout the night I took them one after the other until the boiled water in my flask gave out.

After a few hours this drastic treatment overcame the attack, but left me too tired to take any interest in the journey. As I dared not eat or drink anything but a cup of milkless tea, I lay on my shelf under the hot roof of the coach all morning, determined not to be a nuisance to the three men. The country between Delhi and Wardha remained unknown to me, but this, they assured me, was no loss. Whenever the train stopped, which seemed to be often, George and Barry guarded me against disturbance by fending off would-be extra passengers, who have the right to enter a sleeping compartment by day though not by night. From the graphic fragments of conversation which floated up to me, I might have been afflicted with any form of communicable disease from sleeping sickness to leprosy.

In the late afternoon I dressed and repacked my suitcase, but when we reached Wardha after dark Barry had virtually to carry me in addition to my luggage. He levered me up beside him in the high community bus, which took us over seven miles of dusty road to Sevagram. The dark rural landscape looked empty ; though the new moon was not yet visible, we could see outlined against a starry sky the gently rolling hills of the Central Provinces. Much of India's untapped mineral wealth was reported to lie beneath these hills, where great tracts of land had never known either human or mechanical cultivation. In time, perhaps, her own rich earth would solve the problem of her poverty.

At first the settlement seemed no more than a dim outline of low structures against the enveloping darkness ; unlike Tagore's university, it was illuminated only by hurricane lamps and had no spectacular centre such as the decorated gateway to the Santiniketan office. I was relieved to see Agatha Harrison awaiting us. On hearing the history of my journey she carried me off to a large semi-lit dining-hall for a bowlful of the " good milky stuff " made by the ashram cooks, and then took me to a hut which I was glad to find myself sharing with her.

" I suggested this arrangement," she said, " because I know

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now what the Press work means. I didn't want you to have to write in a room full of people talking."

Our tiled barn-shaped hut of brick and bamboo with its stone floor proved to be a privileged place ; before her death in prison during the war it had been occupied by Gandhi's wife, Kasturba. On the wall, above a small shelf for flowers which suggested a shrine, hung a portrait of her which Manilal Gandhi afterwards told me was not a good likeness. Another photograph showed her kneeling before the Mahatma and washing his feet. This appeared to be a more truthful picture, for it reproduced the strong resemblance between Manilal and herself.

When the light was put out, faint rustlings from the roof and floor due to birds or mice suggested the stealthy movement of snakes, but that night not even a boa-constrictor would have kept me from sleep. Nor did the twenty-inch-wide wooden bedstead, a replica of the one used by Gandhi, on which it was impossible to turn over quickly without pitching on to the floor. Through my thin travelling mattress, the bed felt like an ironing-board covered with shavings.

I woke before six o'clock next morning to find myself fully recovered. This return to normality was providential, for the Press work at Sevagram was to be even more exacting than the bulletins at Santiniketan. After dressing with the aid of a hurricane lamp in the dark hut, I went out into the cool air of early morning to find the ashram prayer-ground in front of our verandah.

Beyond the prayer-ground, the camp revealed itself as a network of huts linked by narrow dusty paths, not red as at Santiniketan, but the normal buff-grey. These paths all led towards the focal point of the ashram, a barn-like, stone-floored assembly hall known as the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, or headquarters of Basic Education.

The far end of the hall, equipped with chairs, was used for lectures and conferences ; wooden staples supported its tiled roof, and the brick walls at the sides were open to the air. No glass was provided or needed ; the mild breezes of Central India in December compared pleasantly with the cold winds at Delhi and Lucknow. The wide apertures overlooked green fields of ripening *juar*, the " poor man's wheat " from which the freshly-baked *chapatis* were made. These unleavened wheat-cakes, in

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appearance like flat crumpets, were served to us both here and at Santiniketan instead of the more costly bread.

We ate our meals on long trestle tables in the front half of the hall. Only vegetarian diet was supplied, prepared with care and cleanliness by the ashram cooks, for Gandhi's followers, like himself, repudiated the use of animal food. Throughout the week at Sevagram my own lunch consisted of oranges, plantains and paw-paws—a large pumpkin-like fruit as sweet as a melon except for its salty, poppy-flavoured black seeds—accompanied by a glass of milk from the Sevagram cows.

When these meals were over, there was no laborious washing-up by a staff of weary menials; each individual took his glass, plate and brass bowl to a concrete platform interspersed with channels where a series of cold taps provided running water. A blindfolded bullock steered by a Sevagram worker turned the wheel which supplied well-water to the pipes. In the middle of the platform sat two girls, one with a bucket of hot water and the other holding a tray of powdered wood-ash to help with the washing of sticky plates. At the far end a waste-basket received the refuse. Beside it a pariah dog was always on guard, hoping to find a piece of *chapati* amid the fruit-skins.

A Sevagram nurse told me that the dogs carried typhus germs and ought to be poisoned, but when I spoke to one and gave him the remains of my *chapati*, he wagged his tail as responsively as any other dog. These stray animals were obviously diseased; their grotesque sores and deformities typified the misdeeds of a society which, having insufficient sustenance for itself, failed to feed and care for them. Even the animals that it valued usually appeared thin and underfed.

"In spite of cow-worship and the work of cow protection societies," wrote Bharatan Kumarappa in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, "the Indian cow is the most miserable of her species throughout the world."

Over tea in the Talimi Sangh that Christmas Eve, the delegates who had parted at Santiniketan exchanged travellers' tales. Between them, according to the original plan, they had practically covered India. An Australian had seen the snow-crowned peaks of Tibet from Darjeeling; an American had met the Baroda Chief of Police and inspected a provincial prison; a



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Canadian woman had toured Orissa in a jeep ; a Czechoslovakian astronomer simmered with enthusiasm over his first sight of the Southern Cross outside Madras.

One party described the far south ; others reported contacts made with Pakistan. Agatha and Amiya were back from Lahore ; a French woman had spent several days in East Bengal, where she persuaded a Muslim teacher, Professor Muthar Quazim Hussein of Dacca University, to come to Sevagram. All the travellers spoke appreciatively of Indian hospitality.

" I wish I'd been able to meet more Indians instead of seeing so many temples," complained one victim of organised sight-seeing. Like ourselves he had observed, especially in large cities, the extremes of great wealth and abysmal poverty side by side. India, it seemed, was a country of enormous contrasts, in which generalisations were out of place.

As the first formal session of the Conference was arranged for Christmas morning, the visitors who had arrived at Sevagram on Christmas Eve were able to explore the village and ashram where Gandhi came in the nineteen-thirties to spend his final years.

For half a century that persistent wanderer had travelled all over India, from the Himalayas and the North-West Frontier to Cape Comorin at the southern tip of Travancore, seeking to serve the common people in their own homes. Now he chose this primitive place, hitherto known as Segaoon, to be the scene of a pioneer community whose members would receive practical experience of Basic Education. At Sevagram they would learn to be creative within their own lives, and to master the processes by which civilisation was maintained. Eventually such small self-sufficient cells would spring up throughout India and, linked with one another, form a new pattern for living.

The phrase used by Gandhi, " Nai Talim," meant " Education for Life." This definition referred not merely to the length of life, but to the substance and depth of the educational process. It implied that education should be both for life and through it.

" The field of Nai Talim," said Gandhi, " extends from the moment a child is conceived in the mother's womb to the moment of death. Education covers the entire field of life. There is nothing in life, however small, which is not the concern of education. You should bear in mind that this primary education would include the elementary principles of sanitation,

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hygiene, nutrition, of doing their own work and helping their parents at home. . . . If we want to eliminate communal and international strife, we must start with foundations pure and strong, by rearing our younger generation on the education I have adumbrated. That plan springs out of non-violence."

Education, thus designed, became synonymous with life itself. Cleanliness, health, citizenship, work, play, recreation and worship, were all part of it as interrelated processes. The ultimate purpose of "Nai Talim" was not only a balanced and harmonious individual but a balanced and harmonious society, in which there would be no unnatural division between "haves" and "have-nots"; no great wealth and no real poverty; no distinctions of caste, class or creed. All religions in such a society would be equally honoured, and man, both as individual and social unit, respected as man.

Such a training could not be given theoretically, through books and lectures; it had to be worked out in living experience. Apart from Santiniketan, where the cultural tradition and university standards were too high for the young and untrained to grasp, no community existed in which students of "Nai Talim" might find both understanding and practical instruction. Before this New Education could become an institution throughout India, a model community, cooperative and self-sufficient, must be built up. Not only must it produce its own necessities of food, clothing, shelter and tools; it must create its own art, music, literature and drama in order to satisfy its aesthetic and spiritual needs.

The Hindustani Talimi Sangh at Sevagram endeavoured, by building such a community, to translate Gandhi's educational philosophy into practice. Its work was divided into five departments, adapted to the age and needs of particular groups. A pre-basic school which children attended from their village homes formed the first unit. Next came a residential school, "Arandaniketan," for children between seven and fourteen; this was followed by recently established "post-basic" departments, which aimed at preparing students for their future vocations. The final division was that of adult education, which functioned not as an institution but in the homes of the villagers. There they learned how to remove dirt from their lanes and doorsteps, purify food and drinking water, prevent epidemics, make the

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cloth, baskets, mats and earthen pots needed in their daily lives, and create a civilised background for birth, sickness, and death.

From every part of India, all castes, and many faiths, pupils and teachers had come to Sevagram. Seven years were regarded as the minimum period in which an individual could learn to be self-sufficient. Each member of the settlement took his or her share of the sanitation and health work, learned the whole process of cloth-making from cotton-picking to the weaving of complex patterns, laboured on the farm or worked in the kitchen, nursed the sick, and at dawn and in the evening met for worship on the ashram prayer-ground. This community did not seek to be entertained, but to entertain; they ran their own music, art and literary societies, and organised plays, festivals and pageants to which they invited the inhabitants of the surrounding villages.

To manage this ashram, Gandhi had selected an exceptional married couple. The Secretary, E. W. Aryanayakam, was an Oxford graduate who might have enjoyed a public career with its substantial rewards. Instead he had chosen to come to Sevagram, which he administered from an office in a mud hut constructed in 1939 at a cost of only 700 rupees. This office was now historic as the place from which the Working Committee of Congress had passed the "Quit India" Resolution in 1942. His wife, Asha Devi, firm, eloquent, and a born conciliator, equalled him in intelligence. The Sevagram teaching staff also included Marjorie Sykes, the biographer of Tagore and C. F. Andrews.

The community, as Gandhi had planned it, functioned as a miniature democracy in which all the rules were made by a general assembly, with each member having one vote. Its cooking and bread-making were done by the staff and students; its recreations included folk-dancing, devotional singing, and a form of gymnastics known as *asan* exercises. Even politics were not excluded. From the foundation of the Basic School in 1939 all the members had saluted the national flag each morning, and continued their homage when flag-hoisting was made illegal in 1942. For defying the British authorities in this fashion, several members of the Sevagram staff had been put in jail.

With the establishment of the ashram, the village itself had been transformed. Before Gandhi came, letters from the

outside world were almost unknown. His mail, of which the mere opening and reading had occupied him and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur for four hours each morning, had compelled the reconstruction of the village postal services, which were now efficient and obliging. Two large red pillar-boxes at different points of the camp symbolised the change. They were not the only Gandhian symbols which the village, like the ashram, had adopted.

Each home and school had its collection of spinning-wheels, which for Gandhi had been the reply to India's poverty. Before the British occupation, most rural homes had owned a spinning wheel, or *charka*, on which the household could spin enough yarn for its members. A return to the spinning-wheel, Gandhi had argued, would provide work for the people in the seasons when they could not cultivate the land ; and for India's huge population, the provision of work was a dominant problem. For each person employed in a modern factory, a hand-loom could occupy twenty-five. It would also add its small quota of earnings to the meagre resources of the poorest families.

But spinning wheels were also symbolic. Just as the cow typified for Gandhi all the lower creation to which he believed that human love should extend, so the spinning-wheel symbolised self-reliance and discipline. It was a means of producing wealth without dependence on others ; it also stood for a decentralised economy in the hands of individuals who could not henceforth be exploited. Gandhi once wrote that he did not object to machinery as such ; what he deplored was its tyranny. For him the predomination of machines created " the doubt in our civilisation " ; he saw cottage industries, which now employed thousands of India's landless labourers, as a check on the modern trend towards centralisation. In so far as the causes of international tension were economic, village crafts and rural products gave another answer to war.

Along the well-kept highroad which ran past the ashram from the village, I returned with Barry and one or two others to spend a few moments in the hut where Gandhi had lived. No trees shaded the roadside ; only our own shadows were cast on the hot gravel surface by the sinking sun. From the ditches of dry grass parallel with the highway, cultivated fields sloped

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gently towards the horizon. Green parrots still flew screeching to perch in the stunted banyan trees of the ashram, and families of baboons paraded through the village from the distant countryside, but Sevagram, a good deed in a naughty world, had risen within ten years from the mud of Segao.

Had Gandhi survived for another decade, a hundred Sevagrams might have grown up all over India to leaven the primitive lump of her 750,000 villages which contained nine-tenths of her population. He could not have lived in them all, but his symbolic presence would have created them as surely as his support and advice gave revolutionary courage to his friends in the Government. Now he was gone, and India's people, like her leaders, must rely on themselves.

The hut of mud and bamboo which was Gandhi's home for his last nine years had been designed for him by Madeleine Slade, the British Admiral's daughter who now called herself Mira Behn. Other similar huts had gradually been erected, for members of his family, for friends and disciples, for foreign guests such as Lord Lothian, who once spent five days at the ashram. An angle of the prayer-ground divided Gandhi's hut from Kasturba's.

That prayer-ground was to become the centre of the Sevagram Conference. There, at four o'clock each morning, the students carried out their devotions, summoning their fellow-worshippers by a bell which after the first dawn always woke me. Each evening another informal service brought delegates, workers and villagers together beneath the dark-blue sky spangled with stars. These services combined, with unexpected success, Indian prayers and music and Christian hymns. The British and American visitors could only listen to the soft staccato plaint of the Indian singing, but the Indians joined enthusiastically in hymns familiar to the West—"Lead, kindly Light," "Abide with Me," and "When I survey the wondrous Cross."

The use of the prayer-ground was not wholly devotional. Two days after Christmas a local singer with a national reputation, Tukroji Maharaj, attracted a large audience from the surrounding villages, and conference delegates who had endured a tense afternoon discussing Indo-Pakistan relations were able to relax at an amiably riotous musical evening. As usual I was tied to my work on the Press bulletin, but when I left

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my hut for a moment to listen to Dr. Mordecai Johnson, I had to step over massed families with their sleeping children resting against my doorway. Dr. Johnson was giving a talk which compared Indian and Negro music, and illustrating it in his rich voice by the two Negro Spirituals which had drawn me from my desk—"Nobody knows the trouble I've seen" and "Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart."

These evenings were still to come when we entered the hut where Gandhi had lived. Unlike Kasturba's hut it had never been occupied since his death; his few possessions remained as he had left them except for the fine-spun white khaddar which now covered the narrow wooden couch.

"This," he had said, "is all the space I require in the world."

Beside the couch stood a low oblong table; on this circumscribed desk his huge mail had been deposited. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, then his secretary, had occupied another modest apartment in the same hut. Towards the end of his life Gandhi added a bathroom where he lay in hot water and was given massage, relaxing in this fashion for an hour each day.

Only the small brass vessel in which he had burned incense stood on his table now. A little wooden bookcase on the floor beside it held the few books that he actually read.

"I read and get all my inspiration from the *Gita*," he told his followers. "But I also read the Bible and the Koran to enrich my own religion. I incorporate all that is good in other religions."

In the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Professor E. L. Allen has claimed that Gandhi's inspiration came as much from Ruskin's *Unto This Last* as from the *Bhagavad Gita*. Undoubtedly he was influenced by Ruskin, Tolstoy, and Thoreau; but, as Tagore and C. F. Andrews were well aware, he never became a book-reader. No doubt he would have said, with the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, that if he had read as many books as other men, he would have been no wiser than they.

Late on Christmas Eve Dr. Rajendra Prasad, having recovered from his asthma, arrived at Sevagram. That night he broadcast an appeal for peace to the peoples of the world from Gandhi's hut. This message was relayed all over India by the Delhi station

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of the All-India Radio, which had been connected with the hut by telephone. A group of appropriate delegates read translations of his appeal in French, German, Persian, Arabic, and Chinese. These too the All-India Radio sent out in its external programmes.

The future President of India proved to be a tall heavy man with a serene expression and smooth unlined face. He might have been any age between forty and seventy ; actually he was born in Bihar in 1884. Under British rule he had been one of three Indian leaders who controlled the Congress Ministries in the Provinces, but as a follower of Gandhi he resigned this position in 1942 rather than support the British war-leaders in return for a promise of independence. Several imprisonments had left his poise unshaken. When he presided with conscientious patience at the Conference sessions he usually left the business to be conducted by the Chairman of the day, and only asserted himself when his experience could clarify a point or explain a problem.

In the Talimi Sangh the delegates who had not qualified as interpreters listened to the broadcast. Surrounding them were Sevagram villagers and ashram workers ; those who could not find room inside crowded silently round the doors and windows. Through the loud-speaker Dr. Prasad's deep voice carried unevenly ; we hoped that the world beyond the village was hearing him better.

" Gandhi," he said, " saw the futility of trying to wash mud with mud, as the Indian saying goes—that is, of trying to end war by war. He tried to tackle it at its roots by making the individual a fit instrument of peace, simplifying his life, spreading and securing confidence and love all round. To create that atmosphere, our lives must be remodelled . . . Environment undoubtedly influences man, but man can change his environment. He can, in fact, create it, if he follows that path of non-violence taught by the Hindu seers of old and by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount."

In the warm darkness outside the hall, the crowd noiselessly increased as the broadcast continued. Dr. Prasad's conclusion came clearly over the air. Neither he nor his hearers foresaw that before another Christmas came, there would be war in Asia.

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“ The knowledge men possess to-day could satisfy all their needs for a comfortable and contented living. It is used to an ever-increasing extent for destruction. It can be diverted to constructive work only if humanity can realise that its own comfort and happiness will increase by renunciation rather than by acquisition ; by turning hatred into love, fear into confidence, right into duty, and exploitation into service.

“ This is the message of the modern apostle of peace who, till the other day, walked this earth and influenced millions by his life and faith.”



## XII—INDIAN CHRISTMAS

“ Behold, the Angels said :

O Mary,

God giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him.

His name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary,

Held in honour in this world and the Hereafter,

And of the company of those nearest to God.

He shall speak to the people

In childhood and in maturity,

And he shall be of the company of the righteous.”

*The Quaran Sharif, Sura III.*

WE WERE ALL up early on Christmas morning. By 7.30 a large company of spinners from the ashram and village had gathered on the prayer-ground for an hour of the silent sacrificial spinning which symbolised the relationship between work and worship. Only the occasional screech of a parrot interrupted the gentle whirr from dozens of wheels operated by the white-robed, dark-skinned men and women who sat so quietly on the dusty earth.

The open-air Christmas service which followed the spinning illustrated Aldous Huxley's comment in the Introduction to the translation of the *Gita* by Isherwood and Prabhavananda : “ It is perfectly possible for people to remain good Christians, Hindus, Buddhists or Muslims and yet to be united in full agreement on the basic doctrines of the Perennial Philosophy.” Prayers, hymns and Scriptures from all four religions combined in a harmony which typified Gandhi's own conception.

An Indian Christian, S. K. George, has related how Gandhi, after fifty years of seeking, saw God bound up with all His creation, and met Him in the toil and sweat of the world's lowliest occupations. He accepted the ideal of a Basic Reality far beyond the capacity of the human mind.

In his youth Gandhi was greatly influenced by the teaching of Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. “ It went straight to my heart on the first reading,” he said. “ I felt it contained the truth that renunciation is the highest type of religion.”

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Though he not only remained a Hindu but became more conscious of his Hinduism as the years passed, his reverence also increased for that part of Christ's message which the Western world has most persistently ignored or tried to explain away. But he saw it always in relation to the similar teachings, exalting love, self-discipline, and non-violence, which other leading religions in their different ways incorporated. In an essay on "Gandhi's Religion," Sophia Wadia quotes one of his mature conclusions :

" True religion is not narrow dogma. It is not external observance. It is faith in God, and living in the presence of God ; it means faith in a future life, in truth and *ahimsa* . . . Religion in the highest sense of the term includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognise it by the name of Truth."

The Sevagram service sought to symbolise that faith and that unity. Our presence on the prayer-ground, representatives of more than thirty nations with different religious creeds, was itself a tribute to Gandhi's belief in the need for toleration and constructive peace in the right living of human life. The unique ceremony began with " A Call to Worship " from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

" Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God," read Reginald Reynolds. " Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a pathway for our God . . . "

The sun climbing above the low hills was already high enough to envelop the prayer-ground in brilliant light. Its beams outlined the thatched roofs of the mud-huts so clearly that they appeared to be carved out of tin.

Two Vedic Prayers and three readings from the *Upanishads* were followed by the singing of Hindu hymns. One, written by Narasinha Mehta, was entitled *The Servant of God* :

" Know this man to be truly a servant of God—  
He knows the sorrows of other men.  
He brings them comfort in their grief ;  
No pride is in his heart.  
Know this man to be truly a servant of God."

Mahayana Sutra's *Vision of Peace* brought the guests from Japan more closely into the circle of worshippers :

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“ Where trod the feet of Lord Buddha  
Village and city are full of grace.  
The people live in harmony,  
The climate is soft and gentle,  
And there is never too much rain or wind.  
The crops are ample, the folk are free from care.  
Weapons and soldiers have no place there.”

After these verses the story of the Nativity, read by Maude Brayshaw, former Clerk of the Friends' Yearly Meeting in London, seemed to take its place in the centre of the pattern.

“ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

“ And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city.

“ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem.

“ To be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child . . . ”

“ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

“ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men . . . ”

On the prayer-ground with its scrubby fringe of banyans the young spinners, their dark eyes lifted to the reader's face, listened solemnly to the words hallowed by years of association for the Christians present. With the same motionless concentration they followed the address given by the Bantu professor, Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu, whose father had been a friend of Olive Schreiner. The service ended with the hymn, “ In Honour of Jesus,” from the *Quaran Sharif*, followed by the German carol, *Stille Nacht*, and the Hindu *Invocation of Shanti* :

“ Peace upon earth below ; peace in the middle air ; peace in the heaven above . . .

Upon the terrible, the cruel, and the evil of the earth.

Filled with that peace and grace be all the realms of Being.”

The opening session of the Conference, presided over for the first time by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, was short that morning, but it was distinguished from the Santiniketan meetings by the

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presence of two new delegates. Michael Scott had flown from Lake Success, where he had persuaded the Security Council of the United Nations to hear the plea of the Hereros tribes against incorporation within the Union of South Africa. East Pakistan's representative, Professor Hussein of Dacca University, had actually arrived. Supported by the Hindu civil servant from Delhi, Sudhir Ghosh, he insisted that the relations between India and Pakistan, discreetly shelved during the Santiniketan discussions, should be an immediate concern of the Conference. Somewhat apprehensively, its members agreed. At noon the session adjourned, for the visitors had been invited by the Sevagram teachers and students to an open-air Christmas luncheon in the Goshala, or farm headquarters of the ashram.

This Goshala had been the starting-point of a larger scheme, later moved to Wardha, for the development of a local breed of cattle known as *gaolao*. When Gandhi established the Goshala this species was almost unknown, but later it became a recognised breed for the dual purposes of draught and milk. At Sevagram he first attempted to eliminate the competition of buffaloes, which often caused the neglect of cows.

The Christmas luncheon, of cooked vegetables and rice, curd and bananas, was served in brass bowls to the foreign visitors who sat on the steps of an open verandah. Under a great awning in the centre of the farmyard, all the members of the Sevagram community from the oldest teacher to the youngest pupil enjoyed the same meal. After this informal gathering came a more impressive ceremony at the local headquarters of the All-India Spinners' Association.

In these capacious grounds beneath a blue sky flecked with light clouds, Sevagram village officially received its guests. A large crowd, in which small boys, placid babies, and massed rows of bicycles seemed to predominate, surrounded the meadow which sloped up to a low ridge of sun-scorched grass. Although the Indian flag waved gently from the top of a pole in the mild breeze, the scene recalled Epsom Downs on Derby Day. The audience, including both boys and babies, appeared to listen with its usual superhuman docility to the customary programme of a dozen speeches.

After supper that evening the Christian visitors, with a few from other faiths, walked back to the Goshala along the dark

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country road to take part as carol singers in a Nativity Pageant. It would hardly have been possible to find a modern setting which came so close to the scenes in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph, the latter played by Marjorie Sykes who had produced the pageant, entered a real stable and laid the Babe in an actual manger. The shepherds, from the highlands of Tibet, might have been the very shepherds who watched their flocks by night two thousand years ago.

Standing amid the sheds of the fine white cows which inhabited the Goshala, the Christians sang "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" and other Christmas hymns at appropriate places in the pageant. The cows, large-eyed and serene, looked on imperturbably at the foreign invasion. One appropriately gave birth to a white calf half an hour before the symbolic birth of Jesus, and stood placidly licking it while the Gospel story unfolded to the accompaniment of carols :

"The first Nowell, the angels did say,  
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay . . .

They looked up and saw a star  
Shine in the East beyond them far ;  
And to the earth it gave great light,  
And so it continued both day and night . . ."

Venus and Jupiter, those lustrous planets which seemed to have moved still closer together during our weeks in India, were doing their best to rival the Star of Bethlehem. The crescent moon seemed hardly more brilliant than these far-off giants of space in the indigo sky, fleecy with the gentle spring-like clouds which India knows only in winter.

Amid the moving animals in the dim yard, illuminated only by oil lanterns, the singers almost believed themselves present at the first Nowell. More challenging than the elaborate Christmas ceremonies in thousands of churches across the world, the simple Nativity Pageant held in Gandhi's ashram seemed a summons to pursue with renewed determination the still unrealised vision of peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

On the way back to the camp came a comic interlude. Earlier in the evening, I had helped to trim a small togur tree set up in a field for the Sevagram children. Our resources were limited, but with fruit, flowers and cotton wool decorating the boughs

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and tiny vessels of lighted oil set on the ground beneath them, we found that we had produced a fair imitation of the yule-trees adorning millions of Western homes. As we passed the field we noticed that the children were still there, dancing round the tree. Immediately they saw us a shout went up.

“ Father Christmas ! We want a Father Christmas ! ”

“ It’s usually the oldest person in the ashram,” a Sevagram worker explained.

George Paine, who had been singing carols, at once volunteered. He was taken into a tent close by, and emerged as a very tall Father Christmas with a red robe and long white beard. Adopting a tone which managed to be both festive and sepulchral, he convinced the children that he was the genuine Santa Claus complete with reindeers and snow.

Wild with delight, they broke loose and raided the tree. When it was completely stripped of flowers, fruit and presents, they hurried away from the dark field excitedly hugging their spoils as they ran home.

The next day such diversions as pageants, carols, and Christmas trees had to be put firmly aside. We were in Sevagram for the more serious, though perhaps not more important, business of continuing a Conference. Portentous topics weighed down the agenda ; sessions awaited us on World Government, colonialism, the persistence of “ crisis situations,” the conflict of ideologies between East and West. In the eloquent absence of a delegate from the Soviet bloc, we tackled this last intimidating problem. A Danzig-born German, Heinz Kraschutzki, who had spent nine years in Spanish prisons, endeavoured to interpret the Russian attitude ; he had been a history lecturer at Potsdam until the Soviet authorities dismissed him for failing to teach the historic Gospel according to Marx.

Occasional flashes of light appeared between the heavy clouds which threatened a third world war. Amiya Chakravarty referred to the gift of streptomycin purchased by the American Quakers with their Nobel Prize money and presented through the Soviet Government to the Russian people. Aage Jorgensen, a Danish student of Tolstoy, reported on the number of Tolstoyans still in Russia though no organised movement was allowed.

“ Tolstoy’s works are still the most widely-read books in

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modern Russia," he said. "The State itself publishes editions as large as 300,000. Even to-day the Russians are a religious people."

Inevitably this topic led to another. How should national Communist parties be treated in democratic countries? Was there any hope of creating a new social order which would establish the economic justice which Communists claimed as their objective, and also permit the individual liberty still to be fully realised in so-called democratic societies? Someone suggested that India, as a disinterested State, might mediate between East and West; seven months later Premier Nehru was to make such an attempt during the Korean War. But India, in the opinion of Reginald Reynolds, had not yet qualified for that position.

"The attitude of the Indian Government to its own Communists is hardly compatible with that of a mediator," he said scornfully. Dr. Prasad, mildly ironic, inquired what policy the Indian Government should pursue when Communists took to sabotage; perhaps the Conference could offer some guidance? I dropped my pencil, and asked him two questions.

"Are Communists in India treated on the same basis as other offenders? Is any opportunity given them to explain their motives when they break the law?"

Dr. Prasad's reply was sincere if somewhat inconsistent.

"Communists are charged under the same law as other people," he said, "but in some parts of the country Communist organisations have been declared illegal. In these places Communists are detained without trial." He rose from his chair. "The Government has gone as far as it can in making concessions. I would go before any tribunal to defend its policy."

Twenty-four hours later, the Indo-Pakistan dispute which had haunted our deliberations like a spectre was faced at last. We had not confronted this particular "crisis situation" by going, as Gandhi had suggested, to a centre of conflict such as Karachi, or Lahore, or Srinagar, but even at Sevagram the discussion held potential dynamite. The relations between India and Pakistan were drifting towards the point of extreme tension which they reached two months later, when communal riots smote East and West Bengal, and war between the two members of the Commonwealth seemed unavoidable. Three times during the session the Chairman, Dr. Mordecai Johnson, asked for a period of

silence in which the owners of rising tempers could remember that Gandhi had sacrificed his life for Hindu-Muslim unity.

"We stand," said the Negro College President, "on holy ground belonging to one of the greatest men in the world who made reconciliation between these brothers his main purpose. We are all aware that if India and Pakistan do settle their differences in a non-violent fashion, they will have raised indescribably the prestige of the people in this Continent."

Two Muslims figured prominently in the discussion which followed. One, Professor Hassan of Cairo University, described the grief brought by Gandhi's death to both Muslims and Christians in Egypt; there was much in Islamic religion, he said, with which Gandhi's teaching coincided. The other, Professor Hussein of Dacca, insisted that he spoke as an individual. My subsequent discovery of the *Dawn* article illustrated the courage required by a Pakistan citizen who came to Sevagram.

The Professor, bearded and dignified, endeavoured to define the causes of friction between the two countries. Primarily, he thought, these causes were not religious; they arose from "power groups" playing upon the emotions of peoples who were keenly sensitive to religious differences.

"We need," he continued, "more contemporary poets and artists who will balance political propaganda with a presentation of life's essential unity. During the transition period, when people had suddenly to face altered circumstances, that sense of unity was lost. It will take time for minorities to adjust themselves to the fact of partition. The inevitable dislocation of life should have been made clearer in advance." He added that he regretted the amount of emigration which had occurred. "It was often led by those who should have set a more courageous example."

Gandhi's last secretary, Pyarelal, described his experience in both sections of Bengal; there was seldom any conflict, he reported, between Hindus and Muslims living in villages. "But there are influences at work besides power groups. People who come from other countries could do a good deal in a personal way to bring about better relations."

Several Hindus followed Pyarelal; one, a worker amongst Muslim villagers in East Bengal, acknowledged that the genuine



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desire of a suppressed people for self-determination lay behind the demand for a Muslim State.

"Since partition there has been a real Muslim renaissance," he insisted. But K. G. Mashruwala, the editor of *Harijan*, took another view.

"India has absorbed many religions and cultures in her long history," he said. "It has only been in recent years that some Muslims have discovered they cannot live at peace with Hindus, and some Hindus have put forward the idea of a hundred-per-cent Hindu State. In this belief a Hindu killed Gandhiji . . . We need more non-violent workers who are ready to risk their lives, and who accept the principle that the work of reconciliation must continue whether it wins a response or not."

Throughout this discussion, the Western visitors had remained unusually silent. They preferred to leave the debate to the Hindus and Muslims, in the hope of understanding a complex dispute which had appeared from afar to be a mere local clash between contentious neighbours, but was now seen as a threat to the peace of the world. Had not Pakistan said that, rather than abandon Kashmir to India, she would seek help from Russia? And had we not located, on a detailed military map, the site of a Russian airfield in Soviet Turkistan, only forty miles from the Pakistan frontier and a hundred from Kashmir?

One Westerner who might have spoken, but did not, was Agatha Harrison. Her contribution came two months later, during the spring riots in East and West Bengal. Answering Mashruwala's plea at the Conference, she was then to travel between the two countries with the young members of the Friends' Service Unit who were working on both sides of the border to alleviate communal bitterness.

At the end of the long discussion, the Chairman asked Dr. Prasad to give his own picture of the causes behind the conflict. The future President of India responded in an honest speech, unimpaired by self-importance. He began by regretting the absence of any delegate from West Pakistan, for tension was then greater in the west than the east.

"The Congress," he continued, "only agreed with the utmost reluctance to the division of India into two separate territories. Before that, all the most cultured people of both religions had fostered a movement towards social and cultural unity

which left religious differences alone. Now there are practically no Hindus or Sikhs left in West Pakistan, and very few Muslims in the East Punjab."

He then summarised the sources of friction between the two States. The first, and one of the most complicated, was the controversy that raged round evacuated property. "On the whole, the Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab had been more prosperous than their Muslim neighbours. This meant that the property they left behind was more valuable than that of Muslim emigrants from India."

Secondly, he said, came the dispute about Kashmir, the only border State between India and Pakistan. It had joined the Indian Union by the decision of its ruling Hindu prince. He implied, but did not add, that the will of the mainly Muslim population had not been ascertained.

"Then there was the abduction of women on both sides of the West Pakistan border. Both Governments have agreed to put the return of these women above political considerations, but the decision has not yet been fully implemented. Finally, there are economic causes of tension, such as the problem that arose when the Indian rupee was devalued while the Pakistan rupee remained at its present rate."

Dr. Prasad reinforced, in conclusion, the appeals made by Pyarelal and Mashruwala to the goodwill of the peoples outside India and Pakistan.

"Much can be done by constructive workers, and by persons who by race and religion belong to neither side. But first, of course, such persons should make an extremely careful study of the facts."

After this official exhortation, those whose knowledge of the facts had been fragmentary felt less than ever inclined to join in the discussion. The debate was petering out when Sudhir Ghosh, the young Secretariat official, closed it by quoting the dying words of the seventeenth-century English Quaker, James Naylor.

"There is a spirit that delights to endure all things, which takes its kingdom with entreaty and not with contention . . ."

In England two months later, when a few concerned individuals were wondering what they could do to arrest the drift of the two Commonwealth countries towards war, they were to think again upon the power of that spirit.

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After the discussion on India and Pakistan, the Conference lacked the vitality which had inspired it at Santiniketan. The novelty of international encounters had now worn off; the idiosyncrasies of strangers were familiar. An audible sigh went round the hall whenever a delegate known habitually to exceed his speaking time rose to burden the overloaded agenda.

The Conference had appointed a Steering Committee which industriously sought to lighten the programme, but could only have done so effectively by scrapping half the items. It was the obvious solution, but they were reluctant to insist. A final session, held by the dim light of candle lanterns with the night air seeping into the hall, lasted almost until the dawn of New Year's Eve. The "unhurried conference" to which we had looked forward became yet another pipe-dream in this land of good intentions.

Day after day I endeavoured in my note-making to keep up with reports, recommendations, summaries and resolutions. There was here no equivalent of the open-air table at which we had worked in Santiniketan; each evening Reginald, Marjorie and I, with occasional help from Lucy Kingston of the Irish Republic, prepared our bulletins in a hut with low windows near the Conference office. The room darkened early, bringing mosquitoes in the wake of the oil lanterns. Beneath their subdued light the ink from my overworked Biro leaked on to my fingers unnoticed, and from them seemed to spread over everything else.

"As a woman, Vera," Sophia Wadia said helpfully at the close of a session, "I am sure you would wish me to tell you that there is ink on your face."

Throughout the week at Sevagram, Manilal Gandhi himself fulfilled the injunction which he had laid on the delegates at Santiniketan. Executive Westerners might look with scepticism upon prayer and fasting; for the Mahatma's son it was the obvious way of spending a Conference summoned to honour his father's memory. In that attitude he was not alone; a week before we met at Sevagram one of the Japanese delegates, Riri Nakayama, a leading Buddhist, had come to fast until the sessions began.

Up to the fourth evening of his seven-day fast, Manilal Gandhi continued to help with the serving of food; he abandoned this task only when the contrast between his abstinence and our plain but

adequate communal meals became uncomfortably obvious. On 30th December he broke his fast at a short ceremony in his father's hut. Outside on the prayer-ground a company of silent spinners kept their monthly commemoration of Gandhi's death.

The Conference ended on New Year's Eve with a visit from Jawaharlal Nehru. Because of the disturbances that threatened the country he travelled under the protection of the armed guard to which J. C. Kumarappa had objected ; India could not afford to see her Prime Minister go the way of Gandhi. Within sight of Sevagram the guard tactfully vanished ; at midday, to the sound of cheering from the village children, Nehru was received on the ashram prayer-ground and lunched with the delegates at their trestle tables.

Some artless intelligence had conceived the idea of presenting him with five addresses of welcome, in which the chosen speakers would put their impressions of India before him, and raise any questions which seemed to them outstanding. For most of the afternoon, the Prime Minister was obliged to listen to these orations. Like any other overworked speaker, he had certainly hoped to get quickly through his own address and go on to an evening engagement at Wardha. Instead, three of the five delegates exceeded their time ; one exhorted him to answer so many of the questions discussed by the Conference that the allocated ten minutes extended to half an hour.

Nehru endured this performance with growing impatience, palpable, it seemed, to everyone but the speakers. It was an impatience that I shared, for the task of reporting his speech to the waiting Indian Press had been allotted to me. At 5.30 twilight would be followed by the swift tropical darkness, bringing oil lanterns and slowing down journalistic progress.

After I returned to England and read through my autographed volume of Nehru's post-liberation speeches, I found in an address on foreign policy some passages which must have returned to his mind as he listened to the long series of moral exhortations.

" It surprises me," he had said, " to see some of our friends from abroad coming here, and doling out good advice to us, which we listen to patiently realising that the advice that is given to us is not necessarily very wise advice, and that the manner of giving it is also perhaps not very wise ; nor does it show much profundity of thought, because with all our failings we are a very

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ancient people, and we have gone through thousands and thousands of years of human experience . . . We have to learn much, and we shall learn much ; and perhaps we have to unlearn a great deal too. But it is curious when people, not even trying to understand what we are, seek to improve us. We do not mind very much, but it does not help . . . I wish all of us would give up the idea of improving others, and improve ourselves instead."

Tea-time had already come when the Prime Minister was able to make his own speech. As he rose, standing informally with his hands on the table as he had stood during the Hindu Code debate, I was again impressed by an elusive quality of youthfulness in his appearance. It seemed to belie the qualms that he had expressed at Lucknow University because he might have only a few more years to live, and there was so much to do. All he asked, he said then, was to work his hardest to the end of his days, and when his job was done to be thrown on the scrap-heap.

" I came to this Conference hoping to receive enlightenment," he began ironically, " but I have been asked so many questions that I feel more confused than I was when I arrived. Perhaps I am here on false pretences. I am not a pacifist, but that doesn't mean that I am not as anxious as anyone to avoid war. The problems that have been raised are difficult enough to solve for one's self ; they become infinitely more complex when one has to think for others and be limited by their limitations. You train them gradually, and then a great wave of passion comes, and your trained groups are swept away."

With unequivocal realism, he summoned his hearers to face the perplexities of statesmen in the modern world.

" I have to decide in particular circumstances ; to compromise all the time and to decide whether I have to compromise or not. I have to stand alone, and yet realise that continuous standing alone may make one ineffective. The person who always stands alone is an erratic nuisance whom no one listens to. Can you compromise and yet hold on to the truth, knowing that you will not go far because you must carry others with you ? That is the position I have to face. One goes step by step, never being dead sure where the next step will lead."

As he spoke, his face reflected his emotions like a mirror ; it seemed impossible to perceive the real anxiety shown there and

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yet doubt, as so many doubted, his sincerity. It was he who had saved India from the paralysis that descended upon her with Gandhi's death ; he who was making her the hope of a renaissance Asia, though he now repudiated with abrupt contempt her claim to that position.

" It is fantastic nonsense to speak of India as the leader of Asia ; such statements merely feed the vanity of the Indian people. At Sevagram you have not seen India ; you have seen one group of good persons. In India there are ten thousand groups, all different in their outlook."

The peoples of Asia, he insisted, were obsessed by their primary needs. In Europe, though it was for so long a battleground, the people were better off than in India which had been outside the field of action. Europeans could afford the luxury of power-politics ; Indians could not.

" I do not mean," he said, " that this is because they are better ; many Indians have behaved scandalously during the past two years. It is because their primary needs are fundamental and urgent ; anything which promises to satisfy these gets the people's support. How can I preach to you about what India stands for when I do not know where I stand myself ? If we are going to do anything in the world, we must begin with ourselves and not preach to others."

He ended by saying that in one sense India was favourably situated, and might be able to act as a bridge in future conflicts.

" We are starting to write on a clean slate with regard to international relations. We are tied to no one's foreign policy, and this flows from our thinking for the past thirty years under Gandhi's leadership. Here you have been discussing his policy of non-violence ; I ask you in conclusion to consider exactly what you mean by violence. I know some pacifists who spread an atmosphere of violence wherever they go, and I know some soldiers who are more non-violent than people who will not fight. Ultimately it is what a man is that counts. He counts when he becomes the embodiment of what he believes in."

In spite of their salutary dressing-down the delegates applauded enthusiastically, but Nehru dismissed their acclamation with a gesture of weariness.

" Now, what about tea ! "

A small scurry ensued. It was evident that, in the excitement

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of listening to the Prime Minister, his human needs had been temporarily overlooked. After a short interval Asha Devi, always the most prompt in action, pushed a tea-tray into my hands.

"You know him, don't you? You take it to him."

I carried the tray through the crowd now buffeting Nehru, and put it down on the table beside him. As I poured out the tea, an Indian delegate endeavoured to be helpful.

"I don't think you know Vera Brittain."

"Of course I do!" exclaimed the Prime Minister impatiently. "I've been in her house."

I waited until the tea had banished his irritation, and then put the question on which my summary depended.

"I've been given the job of reporting your speech for the Press. How much of it is off the record?"

"None of it," he answered briefly. "You can report as much as you wish."

This was the signal for me to start work. The time was already 4.30; in an hour it would be dark. I could not wait, as I wished, to see the Premier leave or say good-bye to him. Instead, after a cup of tea even more hurried than his, I hastened down the dusty path to Kasturba Gandhi's hut; I could write more quickly there than in the conversational dimness of the Press room.

Inside the hut it was already night, so I sat on the doorstep in the oblique rays of the setting sun. They slanted across the Mahatma's former dwelling, sharply outlining the roof as the sunrise had outlined it on Christmas morning. My pencil flew over the pages of my notebook, recording words, gestures, impressions. But reflections for which I longed to have more time pushed themselves into the journalistic summary.

Had Gandhi's mantle fallen upon a worthy disciple? Only history, in the end, could answer that question; at present Nehru himself and those in whose company he had struggled for India's freedom were all answering it in different ways. His greatest spiritual peril, it seemed, was also that which he had defined as India's. It lay, he had said to the Indian people after Gandhi's death, in the sinking of heart and sense of frustration which came to her leaders when they saw their ideals go overboard, and the great matters of which they had spoken disappear in empty words.

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Not for the first time, I felt sympathy with a Prime Minister. Pity would have been out of place, for those who lead great peoples are seldom pitiful ; compassion was appropriate only when the seekers after a sunrise of wisdom had first to pass through the valley of shadows. There they experienced the abysmal fatigue of men and women whose ideals are frustrated by the events of their time, but would they not rather endure it than condemn their restless spirits to the easy pursuit of attainable ends ? If I had thought of putting the question to Jawaharlal Nehru in his room at Delhi where Gandhi's eyes watched him from the dark painting on the wall, he would surely have replied that he preferred his job to one that brought fewer dilemmas and cheaper rewards.

The sun went down over the empty prayer-ground as I finished my report.



### XIII—NEW YEAR IN MADRAS

“ Fill your eyes with the colours that  
    ripple  
on beauty's stream,  
vain is your struggle to clutch them.  
That which you chase with your desire  
is a shadow  
that which thrills your life-chords is  
    music.  
The wine they drink at the assembly  
    of gods  
has no body, no measure.  
It is in rushing brooks,  
in flowering trees,  
in the smile that dances at the corner of  
    dark eyes.  
Enjoy it in freedom.”

Rabindranath Tagore.

LATE IN THE evening of New Year's Day, I left Wardha for a short visit to Madras on my way to the far south. During this twenty-one hours' journey my travelling companions for the second time were Barry, George Paine and Wilfred Wellock, who was going beyond Madras to an ashram known as Gandhi Gram where I had also promised to stay.

That morning the Conference had finally broken up. Before dawn, Agatha Harrison left our hut to join a party going to Delhi. Others spent the day in Wardha, where several Gandhian institutions had taken root. Like Reginald Reynolds, I decided to stay in Sevagram till the evening; owing to our perpetual reporting, neither of us had seen much of the village.

No special celebrations welcomed the New Year, for the Hindus keep this festival on 13th April. The pioneer village had made its biggest effort on 29th December, when the inhabitants held an after-breakfast reception for the ashram visitors on an open meeting-ground resembling a village green, and a member of the local Panchayat, or village council, delivered a ceremonial address. In the centre of the green, a picture of Gandhi stood

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under a tamarind tree ; round it were set brass trays and bowls of flowers. Fruit was presented to the guests, and a few sweets in small envelopes with a typed inscription : " Take this humble sweet offering and speak sweet."

With a pleasant feeling of leisure, Reginald and I walked slowly round the green, orderly village. In its brick-and-bamboo primary school twenty dark-eyed children sat on the stone floor, each with his spinning wheel and hank of raw cotton beside him. No manufactured toys replaced the children's own initiative ; they used whatever materials came their way. Some were making vessels of the red sand from which the bricks of the hut had been baked.

Above the heads of the young spinners, birds flew across the barn-like roof. The teacher explained that these children became expert by the age of fourteen, making sarees from their own designs. In this way they helped to clothe their families, many of whom now lived in the modern cottages gradually replacing the former mud huts. Each of these had a floor-kitchen, an outdoor washhouse, and a verandah designed by Gandhi himself.

Soon after dark the ashram Secretary, E. W. Aryanyakam, drove me along the country road to join my travelling companions at the guest house in Wardha. On the station platform J. C. Kumarappa, who was seeing off the party going to Madras, marched me up and down before the train arrived and vigorously criticised the Government.

The week at Sevagram had been tiring ; we all went to sleep early in the large and steady Grand Trunk Express. By the time that I had stopped re-writing Press bulletins in my dreams it was almost morning. I awoke to find the train running through fertile fields between low mountain ranges, different from any country that I had yet seen in India. During the night we had crossed the Deccan tableland which links North and South India, and passed through the State of Hyderabad.

Eighteen months earlier, terror had reigned here. Private armies, and particularly a body known as the Razakars, had been responsible for " incidents " affecting more than seventy villages. In spite of Nehru's injunctions to " stay put," large companies of frightened villagers had fled into the Central Provinces. Indian troops at last marched in, and the terror collapsed without any communal trouble. The wealthy Nizam, a Muslim ruling

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over the mainly Hindu population, had made his peace with India and disbanded the Razakars. In the spring he was to issue a decree accepting the new Indian Constitution for his State, and narrowly to escape assassination on his way to take the oath by a member of the group that killed Gandhi.

"Hyderabad is, as it were, situated in India's belly," Sardar Patel had said in November, 1947. "How can the belly breathe if it is cut off from the main body? . . . If Hyderabad is to be saved, it must effect a radical change in its methods and policy. In the world of to-day, only those who have guts can make their voice felt. If Hyderabad wishes to be heard, it must follow bravely and courageously the popular will."

To a stranger, the story of Hyderabad seemed to be that of Kashmir in reverse. Patel's thinly-veiled threat was a typical utterance; his blunt, matter-of-fact speeches, despite their directness, appear commonplace in print. Nehru's, by contrast, read like colourful essays filled with fire and vision, though the temperature falls when the topic is Kashmir.

At Bezwada, a Telugu city on the estuary of the River Kistna, the train came to a prolonged halt. This large inlet extended for a hundred miles from the Coromandel coast; sailing boats danced on the water as far as the eye could see. In Buddha's time, the town was evidently a place of pilgrimage; Buddhist caves and *stupas* had been found in the neighbourhood. Along the water front stretched a series of modern buildings; across the river, a Hindu temple stood at the foot of an abrupt rock reddish-yellow in hue. After the neutral-shaded dust of the Central Provinces, the colours of this land irrigated by the Kistna seemed to cry aloud. Through the brilliant green of cultivated fields, the rich soil glowed red like the earth of Devon. Beyond Bezwada, a palm-grove thick as a forest sheltered the railway-line from the sun.

From the next station, Ondole, the train rumbled ponderously southward. Palms grew sporadically beside the line, some tall and slender, others squatting like grotesque bushy dwarfs. Buffaloes with their calves plunged in and out of rust-coloured pools; white paddy-birds, resembling herons, rose startled from the fields of half-grown rice. Along the banks of the water channels, women in gay sarees carried loads on their heads. Groups of thatched mud-huts stood beside miniature lakes of vermilion water; parallel

with the railway ran a dusty terra-cotta road where oxen drew waggons piled with newly-cut hay. No hills were now visible ; the flat land, its surface broken by small veridian swamps, spread beneath the cloudless sky like a tablecloth brightly patterned in red and green.

" The crops are different here," observed Barry. " There's less rice and more maize."

George Paine pointed to cactus plants growing from the scrub. " That section might be California or Arizona."

" And it looks nearly as empty," I added, " though the towns seem to be better distributed down here."

This journey to the South was proving to me, like other railway journeys, that in spite of India's great population, large areas of the country were hardly inhabited at all. India, it seemed, was over-populated only because her productive capacity had not kept pace with the human increase. If the funds now going on defence measures against Pakistan could be spent on schemes for irrigation, industrial development, and hydro-electric power, her surplus population would find work and her productive capacity would soon be doubled.

At the next stop, we acquired a fellow-passenger ; an Indian lawyer with his young servant came into our carriage, followed by the customary mountain of luggage. When the bedrolls, trunks, suitcases and baskets had filled the spaces left by our own packages, the lawyer opened a conversation.

" So you have come from abroad. Are you travelling through our country ? "

I explained that our travels across the world had been due to the Conferences inspired by Gandhi which had just concluded. Our fellow-passenger, much interested, put several questions about our meetings after he had disclosed his own identity.

" I have an official position," he said. " I am in charge of all the Hindu temples in Madras Province."

A discussion began on comparative religion, given further relevance by the small Muslim cemeteries, with their tombs apparently isolated in the red desert far from human habitations, which we passed at intervals. So absorbing was this conversation, and so confident our expectation, based on an incorrect timetable, of another hour or so of travel, that the suburbs of Madras found us unprepared for the ceremonial reception which awaited

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us at the station. While the men gathered papers, sponge-bags and shaving kit into their suitcases, I put on my light outdoor coat and pulled my travelling beret over my untidy hair.

Looking more like a collection of international ragamuffins than a dignified delegation, we fell out of the train into the arms of the reception committee.

Awaiting us on the platform was my hostess, Mrs. Raksha Saran, to whom Kamaladevi had given me a letter of introduction. Beside her stood Mr. H. G. Stagg of Macmillan's Madras office ; Mr. Krishnamurthi, a friend of the K. C. Varma's ; two reporters from *The Hindu* ; and a large group of local Jains. The Jains advanced upon me with a huge garland of damp and fragrant pink roses, which they hung round my neck. When Mr. Krishnamurthi had also pressed a sweet-scented bouquet into my hands, I felt like a rosebush at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Mrs. Saran, a pretty woman with dark curly hair wearing a blue satin saree, had been an Oxford Home Student in 1928, and now helped to run the Madras Branch of the All-India Women's Conference. Her husband, a small man with a mercurial vivacity more usual in Frenchmen than in Indians, directed the Austin Motor Company in India. He had been a follower of Gandhi, and was one of many Indians who described to me their prison experiences with reminiscent pride.

Our hostess put Barry and myself into her car ; George Paine was staying with an Anglican Bishop near Fort St. George, which the seventeenth-century British built on the seashore after Francis Day of the East India Company had founded the city. This was the Tamil country, or "Tamilnad," where the inhabitants still spoke the language of the ancient Dravidians who had been driven into South India by the Aryan invaders.

Further north, between Madras and Vizagapatnam, another Dravidian language, Telugu, was used. To the west the inhabitants of Mysore spoke Kanarese ; farther south, in Travancore and Cochin, I was to find yet another tongue, Malayalam. Mr. Stagg of Macmillan told me later that the Madras office was occupied mainly in publishing text-books in these four languages. They appeared to constitute a strong argument for the continued use of English, not as the language of political domination, but as a literary alternative to Esperanto.

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We drove through this fourth city of India to the Sarans' villa on the green outskirts. At each turn into a new road I could not resist exclamations for which Barry, a determined Philistine, characteristically derided me, for here was beauty such as I had not seen anywhere in the north. The city, built for 500,000 people and now occupied by over two million, was laid out so spaciouly that any section a traveller wanted to visit seemed to be four miles from every other. Looking at the massed banks of poinsettia and bougainvillea, I was ready to endorse Ethel Mannin's comment in a visitor's book seen later at the office of *The Hindu*—"The best yet!"

These flowers recalled New Orleans; so did the white bridges spanning the long inlets where the serpentine River Cooum wound in and out of the city towards the sea. But in New Orleans the little river would not have smelt the same. Three years without monsoon rains to wash away the refuse habitually thrown into it had turned the Cooum into a sewer of which we became painfully conscious every time we crossed a bridge.

Though the river was almost dry, the many trees which shaded the streets remained verdant and vivid. Here, for the first time, was an Indian city in which I could settle down to write and be happy; the colour-contrasts might be violent, but the atmosphere was not. The driving tensions and bitternesses of the North evaporated in this soft, pleasant climate, where no extremes of torrid heat and searching cold came to exacerbate the nerves and weary the spirit.

At the Sarans' house in Haddows Road, Barry shared a big upper bedroom with the children's tutor while I took possession of the ground-floor guest room. The Sarans, who had migrated from Delhi to start the Austin car plant, were newcomers to Madras; their large garden, with a wide green lawn and pots of poinsettias beneath the verandah, was still being constructed.

"Not many people in Madras can live like this," I thought, hanging my garland of pink petals over the white-framed mirror. One afternoon when Mr. Krishnamurthi took me to tea at his house in Chandrabanu Street near the centre of the city, I found that my surmise was correct. The tall narrow dwelling held not only him and his wife, but numerous relatives who seemed to emerge with their children from every room.

His wife, a young woman of thirty with a sweet childish face,

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had been married at thirteen. As she had never learned to speak English we could not converse, but when I left she presented me with a length of gold-edged brown silk.

"That is because she wants you to remember her," explained her husband. "Now I will show you how the poor people live in Madras."

He drove me to the quarters of the local fishermen near the seashore ; here was evidence to prove that Madras was one of the poorest and most crowded Provinces, with a total population larger than that of England and Scotland. Its beggars were still numerous ; on several occasions when I visited the offices of Thomas Cook and Son in the business sector, the same elderly bearded beggar on the pavement outside their door tried to sell me the same wooden toy. None of his potential benefactors, it seemed, had been so unkind as to purchase it

On the bare sandy foreshore overlooking the Bay of Bengal, the fishermen lived in primitive *kuppams* with sloping thatched roofs. As unchanged by the centuries as their homes were the sea-going *catamarans*, constructed like rafts by lashing together the roughly-hewn trunks of trees. In these rude vessels, with a skill handed down from their remote ancestors, the fishermen negotiated the tumbling dark-blue waves, always rough along this part of the coast. On the beach lay another variety of antediluvian craft, the large hollow masoolah boats made from thin planks fastened by rough fibrous rope.

Above the boats, by contrast, stretched the fashionable Marina, where cars sped along the four miles of macadamised sea-front which began at Fort St. George and extended to the old Portuguese town of San Thomé in Mylapore, "the City of Peacocks." A nineteenth-century Governor, Sir M. E. Grant Duff, had been responsible for this popular promenade, where banks of massed cannas, red, yellow and pink, divided the road from the University buildings and a long sequence of Government offices. At the Fort St. George end a once exclusive club, where Mr. Staggs took me one morning for coffee, overlooked the ochre-shaded sand and sapphire sea from a pleasant "English garden." In the evening all classes, all ages, and both sexes took possession of this maritime drive. From a seaside bench, with Mrs. Saran and Barry, I watched them parade in the moonlight. Close by a prominent municipal notice-board warned bathers of sharks.

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In this leisurely city, no set programme of speeches and receptions awaited us. Before I left I did address the staff and students of Queen Mary's College on the Marina, and the South India Journalists' Federation, but for once these engagements appeared to be regarded as acts of grace.

Madras had not always displayed so amiable a temper ; disturbances had arisen in the past from the heavy drinkers who squatted on their haunches in "toddy-shops" to consume a liquid made from the sap of palm trees. The enforcement of liquor prohibition, introduced into the Province soon after Independence and welcomed by the women of poor families, had played its part in creating a peaceful atmosphere. Toleration extended even to communal tensions, an impression confirmed by an incident which Mark Sunder-Rao, a member of the *Madras Guardian* editorial staff, related in the *American World Interpreter*.

One hot January afternoon, the streets of Madras were thronged with agitated people listening to loud-speakers which announced, without details, the stark news of Gandhi's assassination.

Apprehension spread while the populace waited to learn who had been responsible for the murder. As the editor anxiously paced the pavement, a Hindu friend approached him and, referring to Gandhi's death, said quietly, "Come along with me."

The journalist followed him. On either side of the road he noticed a number of small shops owned by Muslims. His friend went from one to the other, speaking quietly to the shopkeepers. In a few moments the Muslim shops were all closed.

"Why have you done this?" inquired the editor.

His friend explained. "The radio did not announce the assassin. Hindus may conclude that a Muslim killed Gandhiji, and you know what this would mean for the Muslims here. Now they have all closed their shops and gone to places of safety."

Barry and I had arranged to spend four days in Madras, but the Sarans did not even press any sightseeing upon us. We ought, we supposed, to visit St. Thomas's Mount, the cliff of green stone eight miles from Fort St. George, where according to tradition St. Thomas the Apostle was speared to death for humbly sharing



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the fishermen's homes after making his way like other Roman travellers to the Coromandel coast. Perhaps we should drive fifty-two miles to the ancient Pallava seaport of Mahabalipuram, with its monolithic shrines, rock-hewn galleries and carved cliff known as "Arjuna's Penance," which European visitors called "Seven Pagodas" owing to a maritime tradition that seven temples roofed with burnished copper once extended into the sea.

But we made neither of these expeditions. Whatever George Paine might be doing, and we suspected that he was doing a good deal, we decided to spend the four days wandering argumentatively round the city, or going on simple expeditions which demanded no spectacular outburst of touristic energy. A visit to the Austin motor works in Mr. Saran's car took us to an historic promontory fourteen miles away. When we had admired the automobiles receiving their final coats of green or grey paint and observed the liberal allowance of light and air provided for the workers by the modern building, we walked to a little hill above a coconut grove, and across an inlet of the sea saw the house, now a ruin, in which Robert Clive had lived. In our honour some boys climbed the palms; they brought down green coconuts and smashed the shells. We who were seeing the end of British India drank the juice on the sunlit hillside which had witnessed its beginning.

British rule had now been followed by a High Commissioner and the usual British Information bureaux. The hospitable Director of the Madras office drove us round the city; at our request he stopped before an open gateway ornately labelled with a challenging sign: "GEMINI FILM STUDIOS."

"Can we go in?" I inquired, for a glimpse of cannas and bougainvillea in the garden gave promise of the magic always held for me by flowers.

"Why not?" said the Director. "As it happens, the man who runs the place used to work for Macmillan."

The garden, we perceived, was rich not only in flowers, but in portable rock gardens and exotic trees, since it was used for jungle scenes. In the property-rooms we found evidence that counterfeit itself had become a science; the guide lent to us by the Studio Director explained the costume chosen for the hero-king in a film where the scenes went back two thousand years.

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"We don't have to put him in what he *would* have worn," said the guide. "That was probably nothing anyway. He has to wear what the public thinks he ought to."

"And it's your job to know what they think?"

"Exactly," he replied, showing us a cardboard representation of the king's castle. "It's the same with this palace—it has to fulfil their dreams. In fact it's like a dream itself; here to-day, torn down to-morrow. Come and see the film we're showing, and meet Radha, the star who's playing in it."

The picture, *Strange Brothers*, was being shown in Hindi for the benefit of the players' relatives, who did not understand the South Indian languages used in Madras. Radha, a handsome mild-mannered actor of medium height, seemed curiously unlike the daring and romantic hero of the film.

We stopped the car again at a shop in the centre of the city which sold the products of cottage industries. Madras workers specialised in leather; I looked covetously at a collection of skilfully wrought snake-skin handbags, costly enough, but cheap in comparison with the prices being asked for them at home.

"You ought to buy one," urged Barry.

"I can't," I said. "I daren't use up my rupees till I get to Bombay." But later I regretted the self-imposed economy, for neither at Bombay nor Karachi did I see leather goods which rivalled the work of Madras.

This financial caution broke down next day at Adyar, the home of the Theosophical Society. Here the indefatigable Annie Besant had lived for several years in a forest dwelling on a tidal river, five miles from Madras. She had been there in 1917 when she was interned, with G. S. Arundale and B. P. Wadia, for voicing India's demand for freedom. Under the giant banyan in the Blavatsky Gardens surrounding the house, three thousand people had assembled for public meetings.

This Theosophical Centre, with its large red library adorned by elephants' heads in white relief, now housed a School of Crafts and Dancing. The School, known as Kalakshetra, or "Sacred Abode of the Arts," had been founded in 1936 by Rukmini Devi. We watched three dances, but it was the crafts which overcame my sales-resistance. From hand-spun silk the students made the finest sarees I had ever seen, and sold them to raise funds for the School. In a small exhibition-room the Secre-

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tary of the Centre opened two cupboards, and from the shelves brought out an armful of silks and brocades.

He laid the sarees before us on the table, purple, orange, jade, saffron, and turquoise-blue embroidered in silver. I was repudiating temptation when a length of pure white silk with a gold-embroidered border caught my eye. It reminded me at once of my nineteen-year-old daughter.

"How long is it?" I asked.

"Five yards—but the material is wide."

Hardly enough, I thought, to make her an evening dress. Then another idea occurred to me. One day she might marry; no wedding dress I had ever seen had such a train as this hand-spun silk embroidered in pure gold thread.

"How much?" I inquired weakly.

"One hundred and sixty-five rupees."

Disregarding Barry, who was talking provocatively about economy, I opened my purse and the saree was mine. In spite of the attention subsequently paid to it by the Liverpool Customs officials, it was not, in terms of its quality, an extravagant purchase.

The night before we left Madras, I addressed an audience which was probably the most critical to be found in India. Shortly after our arrival Mrs. Saran had taken us to have morning coffee with the editor of *The Hindu*, India's *Manchester Guardian*. At his office I met the brilliant sub-editor, Mr. Raghunatha Aiyar, a remarkable looking man with a double row of bottom teeth and one of the best brains in the country. At once he inquired whether I would address the South India Journalists' Federation on any subject connected with literature.

Rumour had told me that other British authors had found this group difficult. As the recipient of hospitality I could hardly refuse, but I felt apprehensive and uncomfortable as I climbed a long flight of outdoor steps to the upper room, resembling a furnished loft, where the meetings were held. Here I spoke on the problems of modern writers; the conflict of the author who desired to create beauty, and yet was aware of an obligation to contribute, in an age of violent change, to the human consciousness of events and their meaning. I cited Milton and Tagore as typical of past writers who had endeavoured to serve both beauty and justice.

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When I had finished, Mr. Raghunatha Aiyar politely pulled my speech to pieces from the Chair. After he had turned it inside out and upside down, he added some comments of his own.

"This business of increasing the periphery of consciousness may have two sides to it," he said. "If there is the extrovert writer on the one side and the introvert on the other, there may also be a golden mean. Valmiki was an instance of this. In India the emphasis is always laid on the golden mean."

"And in China too?" I suggested.

"Yes, in China too. There are writers who recognise that all things work out well in the course of time. Perhaps," he added smiling, "those who try to report their unique vision of the world have done more for reconciliation in the long run than any others."

I felt somewhat bewildered as I descended the stairs. Had I been written down as an introvert or an extrovert? At least I had avoided the rocks and shoals of the acute controversy that I had dreaded.

On 5th January, with Henri Roser as the fourth member of the party, we left Madras by the "Trivandrum Express." Our first destination was Dindigul, the nearest town to the ashram at Gandhi Gram where we were to spend a night on the way to Madura. My flimsy page of typed instructions briefly described the place.

"Gandhi Gram: Rural Workers Training; Basic Ed.; Village Uplift."

Like most trains in the South, the optimistically-named "Express" proved to be even more in need of modernisation than its counterparts in the North. Each compartment was divided into two sections, with a door separating the groups of passengers; space and fresh air were thereby reduced. The annexe was primitive; it contained no shelves and only a couple of hooks, so that the wet and dirty floor provided the sole repository for towels, sponges, and discarded clothes. A stiff and ancient pump supplied the metal wash-basin with water; so recalcitrant was this apparatus that whenever I wanted to wash I had to summon Barry.

We retired early, for we were due to reach Dindigul at 5.30 a.m. More than an hour before that time, George Paine, finding

## *New Year in Madras*

me awake, pointed through the open window to a vivid constellation just above the western horizon.

“ Look ! Won’t that be the Southern Cross ! ”

No European can resist the exultation which comes with the first sight of these brilliant stars, set like the ends of a cross tilted sideways in the sky. Whenever, on subsequent nights in the South, I succeeded in rousing myself during the small hours, I was rewarded by seeing this symbolic pattern of miniature lanterns gleaming against the intense darkness of the western sky before dawn.

From Dindigul a long drive brought us to the ashram in time for breakfast. The car stopped at a camp of thatched white-washed huts, built on a sandy plateau between two ranges of rocky hills. This area had first been explored by Jesuit missionaries, who chose those hills for their earliest settlements. Finding them infested with malarial mosquitoes, they moved fifty miles to higher mountains rising above the mosquito level to 7,000 feet. The plateau itself was 1,000 feet high ; even in the hottest weather, fresh breezes blew through the valley. Cobras lurked in the foothills, and jackals howled on the edge of the camp.

The American missionary, Richard Keithahn, who had founded this ashram, greeted us as we alighted from the car ; though he was recovering from an attack of malaria, his tall lean figure was clad as usual in brown shorts and an open-necked, short-sleeved khaki shirt. At Santiniketan and Sevagram, he had served on the Steering Committee of the Conference. With Richard Gregg from Vermont, he represented a rare type of American. Repudiating industrialism, mechanisation, hustle, success-worship, and other realistic qualities which have made his nation the most powerful in the world, he had sought salvation in the contrasting civilisation of India, and discovered it in the teaching of Gandhi.

“ It was at the social level of Gandhi’s religion that many of us found his religious living most revolutionary,” he wrote in the Gandhi Memorial number of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*. “ Those of us of the western religious tradition have found ourselves in a way of life which departmentalised life . . . With the Fakir of India it was different. He took his religion into life.”

### *Search After Sunrise*

Dick Keithahn, a Master of Arts from Yale University, first came to India in 1925 to work in the villages under the American Madura Mission. Owing to his qualifications he was given institutional work, but continued his revolutionary contacts with Gandhi's village followers. In 1930 the Mission Secretary was officially informed that Dick must be out of India within three weeks. The Governor of Madras afterwards denied that the order had been issued, but Dick thought it wiser to return to the United States.

In 1935, unable to stay out of India, he came back as an independent missionary, and joined the Social Workers' Brotherhood in Bangalore. Nine years later, the Government of India again asked him to leave. This time the request was more decisive, for his pro-Gandhian sympathies and support of the Indian National Congress had become widely known.

Directly Indian independence was proclaimed, Dick returned. For some time he had hoped to start a village centre on Gandhian lines; this plan had been discussed at Wardha with Gandhi's associate G. Ramachandran and his medical wife, Dr. Soundram. During Dick's absence in America, Dr. Soundram had found a site for the pioneer "Gandhi Gram." The villagers in this area welcomed the idea of a training centre for women village workers, and offered a hundred acres of land in the Sirumalai Valley near Dindigul, in the Mathurai District of Tamilnad.

As soon as the settlement was founded, Gandhi Gram dedicated itself to working out Gandhi's Constructive Programme in adjacent villages. Thirty of these existed within a three- to six-mile radius. In spite of the financial limitations from which such pioneer experiments always suffer, the ashram workers had managed within two years to train 120 women for village service, run a model Basic School, found a Maternity Home which now had twenty beds, start a Leprosy Relief Centre, open a Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society, begin intensive health work in five selected villages, and take over a yarn production centre at the largest village, Vannampatti, which had a population of 15,000.

In the camp itself a small home, the Balamandir, had also been started for village orphans and foundlings abandoned by their parents; the new guardians hoped that these victims of life would eventually become constructive workers too. During the

morning I visited this nursery, and saw one young child who had been abandoned when a week old in a hospital doorway and mauled by a dog. Even after five months this scarred girl baby still appeared strange, like a miniature witch, but I was assured that she was gradually becoming normal.

Dick Keithahn drove us to a village at which a high-caste Brahmin girl was in charge, living a dedicated life with only a young *Harijan* and occasional visits from the Gandhi Gram workers to help her. This girl wore a deliberately elegant dress which intensified the grave beauty of her face, though she had adopted her loneliness as consciously as St. Francis embraced his poverty.

Except for a recently-constructed well and its relative cleanliness, her village was typical of its 750,000 counterparts. These communities shared the same characteristics, though they varied in size from a group of mud-huts under a palm-tree to large concentrations of families such as Vannampatti. Their deep inertia had survived invasion, revolution, and war; managed in the past by Panchayats, or Councils of the five most influential inhabitants, they had proved as resistant to change as any form of human settlement.

Most villages were still inaccessible by modern roads; they lacked every facility taken for granted by the West, such as gas, electricity, drainage, telephones, and other kinds of external communication. Only a few had acquired the rudiments of sanitation, hygiene, and privacy. Wells for pure water were still luxuries; the water used for cooking and washing came from scummy ponds or ditches replenished by the monsoon rains. Any piece of ground within reach of a hut provided the only "convenience" for the functions of nature.

The colossal unsatisfied needs of village India had not been unknown, though they had often been ignored, by the civilised minorities which occupied the country. A few responsible individuals both British and Indian had attempted the discouraging task of filling a tank with a metaphorical tea-spoon; they included the wives of several Viceroys, and cultured Indian families such as the Tagores. But Gandhi had been the first to devise a method both simple and comprehensive enough to plant the seeds of civilisation. The Brahmin girl whom I saw was one of the many that his life had inspired.

### *Search After Sunrise*

"It's her chosen vocation," Dick Keithahn told us. "Her family doesn't approve, but she insists on doing it."

That evening Dick asked me to address the girl students in the camp assembly room, and I spoke to them briefly of the British women's movement. The intelligent questions that they asked surprised me; these girls, I perceived, were not only the channels for "village uplift," but the agents of the women's revolution throughout India. In their quiet unpublicised thousands, the women doctors, nurses, teachers and social workers who ran clinics, opened schools, introduced sanitation and taught hygiene, were transforming both their country and themselves. My respect for them deepened as we went out together for evening prayers, held on a stone platform surrounding the flag which the girls saluted each morning.

I spent the night on a camp bed in the clean stone-floored office; the solitary guest-room next door was still occupied by Wilfred Wellock. Blue distempered walls contributed a gay quality unusual in offices, and by the late evening I had grown too sleepy to be disturbed by the loudly ticking clock or the small spiders which descended on the bed at intervals from the gabled bamboo roof. But washing presented a problem, for the office possessed neither basin, sink, nor tap. The only "facility" appeared to be a bucket of cold water on the step outside the door.

I put my difficulty before Dick Keithahn.

"Wilfred takes off his shirt and washes on the door-step," I said. "If I do the same, it might cause a sensation in the camp. Can I have a bucket inside my room?"

The bucket duly appeared. This time I did wash in it instead of pouring it over myself, for the office contained no means of disposal. In the early morning I threw the soapsuds on the gravel outside, and joined Barry, Henri, George and Dick in another hut for a breakfast of cooked rice-cake, fruit and coffee.

At 7.30, with Dick driving, we set out in a jeep for Madura.



## XIV—FARTHEST SOUTH

“ Nor could I miss Cape Comori,  
Where mounts of Fruitful Shell-fish ly,  
That Orient Pearls do in their womb contain.  
Where the bold Indian jumps into the Main,  
Doth down into the Shining Bottom Dive,  
But needs no Light, but what the Pearls do give.”

Thomas Heyrick. *The Submarine Voyage* (1691).

THE DRIVE TO Madura meant a run of forty-five miles, which took us off the main road through many typical South Indian villages. I sat in the front of the jeep between Dick and George; the others accommodated themselves at the back. As we rounded the rocky spur of the Lower Palnis which end the Eastern Ghats, the early sun drenched their summits until each mountain seemed to wear a halo. We turned into a well-laid dirt road shaded by tamarinds and palms.

Our journey conveyed us through the sugar-growing area of the Mathurai district, where the manufacture of jaggery, an unrefined sugar made from sugar-cane and palm trees, had been a village industry for centuries. Jaggery not only retained the food values lost in white sugar; it provided thousands of villagers with work in the months following the harvest. At this time Dick Keithahn, and Gandhi Gram with him, were involved in a struggle for justice on behalf of these growers which he explained to us as we drove under the trees.

In recent years, he said, there had been an increasing demand for sugar in India, especially from the cities, and the previous July the Madras administration had passed a Sugar Act giving the Government power to control the sugar-making industry. On 15th December, three weeks before our visit and in the midst of the jaggery-making season, an order had gone out under this Act that all the sugar-cane in the area should be sent to a local factory newly erected at Vadipatty. The order threatened to put two thousand people out of work and extinguish a valuable rural industry. The cane-growers had resisted it, and Gandhi Gram.

believing the order to be detrimental to village welfare, supported their protest.

"If a Gandhian centre is not in trouble in the area in which it works there is something lacking in that work," Dick Keithahn wrote in a printed letter which he sent me six months later. He added, for more general application: "I would say this in another way to Christians: 'If a Christian is not in tension with society at several points he cannot be a loyal follower of Jesus.' The ways of Gandhi or Jesus are revolutionary for these days. Are we loyal to the way of 'Truth—to the way of the Cross?'"

A "Sugar Satyagrahi," offering non-violent resistance to the Government of Madras, was planned to begin on 16th January with the support of the Mathurai Constructive Workers' Fellowship. Gandhi Gram, it seemed, might well be imposing upon itself "the way of the Cross"; some quiet reorganisation was going on, owing to the possibility that Dick and others would be put in prison. A tense atmosphere pervaded the villages through which we passed. In one the cane-growers had been idle for fifteen days; at another and larger village, called Kindiyampatty, we stopped. Immediately a crowd, its dark faces pressing eagerly against the wind-screen, thronged the familiar jeep.

We left the car, and followed the excited crowd up a dusty track between insanitary mud-huts thronged with people and animals. A cavalcade of villagers, quarrelling dogs, and butting bullocks trying to escape from their keepers, pursued us to a natural clearing encircled by huts at the top of the hill. These also were crowded to the verandahs; in Kindiyampatty, as in other Indian villages, the sharing of rooms and even of beds appeared to be regarded as a form of enjoyment. This love of congregating in family masses extends to railway coaches, buses, cars, carts, and every other form of transport except aeroplanes, where accommodation is limited by weight.

I was impressed by the absence of evil smells, for a Western village similarly maintained would overpower the visitor. One explanation, I learned, came from the Indian habit of ritual washing, but the chief cleanser was the strong and perpetual sun. In a few moments its powerful rays dried every form of human and animal excreta, mingling it with the dusty earth of which the particles were in constant transit.

On the hill-top clearing, a public open-air meeting developed.

## *Farthest South*

Dick Keithahn made a long speech in Tamil ; the dark intelligent eyes of the male audience watched him intently. In the corner of a verandah above the little square stood a group of women. They were still excluded from the political programmes of the village, but the shadow across their bewildered observant faces was the shadow of India's future.

When Dick had finished, he turned to Barry and me. " Just say a few words to them. Give them a message from your countries."

We stood up in turn and spoke as he requested. Barry talked of the Maoris in New Zealand and their growing share in public life ; I addressed myself to the women huddled on the verandah. A young constructive worker interpreted our remarks ; how far they were understood we had no means of knowing, but we were both loudly applauded. Our audience then pressed sugar-cane sweetmeats upon us, evidently regarding us as part of the revolutionary campaign which was defending their rights.

Some months after my return to England, Dick Keithahn told me the end of the sugar-growers' story. The Madras Government had remained obdurate up to the day before Satyagraha was due to begin. That evening they sent word that they would negotiate. Eventually the official order was withdrawn, and the villagers were permitted to make their own sugar or sell it to the mill as they wished ; one more victory had been registered for Gandhian methods. Gandhi Gram turned to the even more serious problems raised in that area by absentee landlords and landless agricultural labourers.

The jeep carried us towards Madura through a well-irrigated district, in which flood-water from the mountains was diverted into reservoirs and distributed in narrow channels through the vivid fields of young rice. Paddy-birds waded placidly amid the swamps ; blue-green kingfishers flashed from the purple-headed sugar canes to perch above us on the telegraph wires. In spite of the long detour through the country and the public meeting, we reached Madura by ten o'clock.

Here a local surgical specialist, Dr. P. N. Rama Subrahman-yam, had placed his house at our disposal for the day. His wife, formerly a lawyer and now the mother of two small boys, gave us tea and bananas before we set off again to visit the Madura temple. This prodigy of Hindu religious architecture had once

## *Search After Sunrise*

stood in a forest, she told us ; gradually the trees had been cleared and the city had grown up around it.

In *India for the Indians*, Dorothy Jane Ward records a comment made to her by an old *saddik*: "Hinduism is what you can understand. Each man takes from it what he is capable of putting into it." Less romantically she adds : "Nothing Hollywood could ever conceive of could be capable of shocking or corrupting youngsters who had visited their own country's temples."

This comment was abundantly illustrated by the Madura temple, with its eight intensively carved *gopurams*. Four of these mitre-shaped pinnacles were enormous, and four of more moderate size ; between them stood two towers entirely covered in gold-leaf. In the centre of the grotesque structures stretched the sacred pool, which resembled a large open-air swimming bath where the green water is never changed. Our host explained later that the pool was actually kept in motion by an interior spring, but he added that the basin was never cleared of the dirt deposited by the numerous bathers.

The interior of the temple had apparently been designed as a vast expression of fertility worship ; its symbols were savage rather than devotional. What spiritual inspiration did any worshipper find in those heavy-breasted goddesses, or in the semi-animal masculine images with their generative organs fantastically extended to resemble the branches of trees ? Cruelty beyond description seemed to lurk in the vehement colours of the voluptuous bodies and the avid protruding eyes set in gargoyles-like heads. The very elaboration of the massed carvings on the largest *gopuram* implied an undisciplined prolixity.

A snapshot, taken by Barry, of George Paine, Henri Roser, our guide and myself standing in front of the temple, shows strange carven faces peering over our shoulders : the faces of men gone slightly askew, of dragons, animals, and armour-clad gods with starting eyes and protuberant lips, painted white on black masks. Fear, horror, the mingled terror and ecstasy of sexual excess—these were religion according to the Madura temple. There seems to be little doubt that this exaggerated Hindu cult of fertility was responsible for Gandhi's Paul-like repudiation of marital intercourse. Men's appetites, he might

well have said, are emphasised enough ; they do not require over-emphasis in the form of worship.

And yet . . . was not the Madura temple itself a corrective to that asceticism run mad which had grown up in India as a revulsion against these lust-ridden gods ? Which was more humanly tolerable, a grotesque fertility-worship, or the harsh abstinence which denied validity to the God-given senses and their power to experience and preserve beauty through sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell ? Tagore, the authentic voice of cultured India, had no use for this form of ingratitude to the Creator ; for him the senses were instruments through which the mind and spirit could speak.

“ Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.

I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses,

‘The delight of sight and hearing and touch will bear Thy delight.’”

This was the issue on which Tagore and Gandhi could never agree, the root of those fundamental differences in personality and outlook which were bridged only by the greatness of both.

The long walk round the outer circumference of the temple (only Hindus were admitted to its Holy of Holies) taught me even more about India’s hygienic lapses than village customs and the sacred pool. Like all visitors to a shrine I had removed my shoes, and unlike the men who wore socks was obliged to walk barefoot for half a mile amid the banana skins and other forms of garbage casually dropped on the enclosed pavement. The doctor, when we returned to his house, thoughtfully provided a Dettol footbath.

After a substantial Indian lunch he gave us, with unabated hospitality, some more of his valuable time. Madura, he told us, was a centre of the cotton industry ; the head of Harvey’s, the leading textile firm, had built himself a mansion on a rocky hill outside the city.

“ But he is a good employer, concerned for his workers. Ten miles from Madura he has established a cooperative village which you ought to see.”

He drove us out to the village, where the textile workers lived in strongly-built, well-ventilated huts which we duly admired. After the Madura temple, the contrast was disconcerting ; we seemed to have been transported from a medieval exhibition of

barbaric rites to a twentieth-century garden city founded by the Independent Labour Party. A compromise was achieved between the two extremes when our host took us to share tea and bananas with the Principal and his deputy at the local College of Arts.

We left, as we imagined, just in time to catch the evening train to Trivandrum, capital of the State of Travancore which covers the south-west corner of India. This train was not another "express," but an even slower form of transport known as the "Trivandrum Passenger." On it Wilfred Wellock was travelling from Dindigul with our luggage, which could not be accommodated on the light, narrow jeep.

Neither the train nor Wilfred arrived. As the noisy station became more crowded, and the pile of orange-peel and banana-skins discarded by would-be passengers steadily grew, we waited for half an hour ; an hour ; two hours. Dick Keithahn, patiently seeing us off, waited too. Not even our baggage was there to sit on ; the few platform seats were crammed with men, women, babies and suitcases. The day which had begun at dawn in Gandhi Gram began to seem interminable.

A textile salesman also awaiting the train created a diversion ; he was carrying a bundle of cotton sarees from a local factory to a warehouse down the line. Sitting on the platform to adjust the string round the parcel, he displayed the cheerful colours of his goods. Each saree had a wide satin edge, patterned in squares which contrasted gayly with the material.

"How much?" we asked, looking with newly-awakened interest at the rainbow heap of cotton.

"Eight rupees," he replied, quoting, we assumed, the wholesale price of a saree. In a few moments his journey down the line had become unnecessary ; the waiting travellers had purchased his stock.

This transaction was barely completed when the train ambled into the station with Wilfred and our luggage. "Engine trouble" had developed, he explained, wearied by the incessant delays. Having to change trains on his way to another ashram he left us to occupy the compartment, which was as usual a Second. The "Trivandrum Passenger" eventually continued its dilatory if optimistic journey southward with the same engine, since no other was available.

## *Farthest South*

George, Barry, Henri and I travelled together as before. The combination lavatory and latrine was dirtier than ever ; the ancient pump creaked even more loudly than its predecessor, but Barry was now an expert in handling out-moded contraptions. Since dust already covered the carriage we left our windows wide open, for the night was very warm. Through them, at one way-side station, came an invasion of insect life ; the small elongated flies resembled mosquitoes but did not bite. Too tired to care whether they bit or not, we swept them on to the grimy floor and went to sleep. I woke for a moment before dawn, and saw, clear and challenging above a dark horizon, the Southern Cross.

Early that morning we reached Trivandrum only an hour late ; though the train appeared to stop every few minutes, it had somehow made up time in the night. Looking out of the window, I understood why Travancore had been called " the Garden of India." This pleasant humid land of inlets and backwaters, shaded with palms and inhabited by amiable brown boatmen, was the tropical country of Pierre Loti's novel, *Les Désenchantés*.

In London, the High Commissioner and his aide, Captain Srinivasan, both South Indians, had urged me to visit this part of the country ; for two thousand years, they said, it had preserved intact its Aryan culture and the ancient civilisation centred on the Malabar coast. No invasions had disturbed its immemorial peace ; the jungle-covered West Ghats which formed its eastern boundary had saved it from invasion. Cut off from the mass of India by this mountain rampart, Travancore had developed instead a coastal trade ; its long history was linked with that of the Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans. To-day those Western Ghats, with their sixteen dangerous and seldom-used mountain passes, could be crossed, as I was to cross them, by air, but throughout the past they had preserved for India an unspoilt Paradise of hills and dales, palm-groves and inland lakes.

At the station two representatives of the Travancore Government, bowing respectfully in their neat khaki drill uniforms, met us and conducted us to a luxurious limousine. After the sketchy toilet at Gandhi Gram, followed by the drive to Madura, the day of sight-seeing, the long wait at the station and the insect-ridden night in the dirty train, we must have appeared singularly

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inappropriate passengers for the elegant car with its smartly-equipped driver. But the beautiful green town, so rich in the gold and red of tropical flowers beneath luscious palms, offered fair compensation for grime and fatigue.

Our escorts put us down, as guests of the State, at the Government-owned Mascot Hotel. This white-painted building, with its red gabled roof, stood in the most verdant garden that I had ever seen. A turbaned bearer deposited my suitcase in a pleasantly furnished ground-floor room which possessed, I noticed with satisfaction, the unusual luxury of a full-length mirror. Its windows looked across the verandah towards the flower-beds where orange cannas and purple bougainvillea seemed to be singing a hymn to the sun. A volminous white net erected over the bed suggested a possible nightly invasion of mosquitoes from the garden, but the only noxious insect that demanded my attention was one large cockroach which walked impressively out of the bathroom. The hotel staff hurried solicitously to remove it, and after the first peaceful night I slept without the net.

When I had bathed and changed, and the men had shaved, we sat down to a breakfast of tea, grape-fruit, eggs, bacon, toast and marmalade ; such Western luxury seemed overwhelming after simple ashram meals and the scraps of food eaten on trains. At the next table sat the Irish manageress of the hotel ; her father, she told us, had edited a newspaper, *The Pioneer*, to which Rudyard Kipling used to contribute.

Outside the dining-room, two itinerant vendors who visited the hotel daily had arranged a stall of small ivories. When I had examined the carved elephants, spoons, and book-markers, and had purchased a couple of miniature pen-knives, a tall and unusually upright Indian who had been sitting patiently on the verandah rose to greet me. Though he was still on the young side of middle-age, he wore his long robe of white khaddar with the dignity of a Roman Emperor. Instinctively I compared this Eastern decorum with the informal attire favoured by the non-Asiatic delegates to our Conference. Anglo-Saxon males living temporarily in a tropical climate appeared to find shorts an irresistible temptation, though their bare legs were thereby exposed to mosquitoes, ants, scorpions, and other ubiquitous assailants. Some had also discarded their shirts, an experiment



### *Farthest South*

which demands the figure of an Apollo if it is not to wreck the appearance of a public gathering.

My visitor extracted a printed card from his robe and handed it to me.

"Macmillan and Co., Ltd." I read. "Publishers. Patullo Road, Madras 2. Represented by V. R. P. Nair, B.A., Pattam, Trivandrum."

I remembered that my friend Mr. Stagg, when I dined at his home in Madras, had promised to write to their Trivandrum representative. His name, I learned later, was characteristic of Travancore; the Nairs were a caste of Hindus found only in Malabar. According to local tradition they had developed their own civilisation long before the coming of Brahminism and the introduction of Aryan culture.

"Where is Macmillan's office?" I inquired.

"There is no office here," Mr. Nair replied. "I represent their interests in Travancore, and I am at your service. This afternoon, I understand, you are to be driven to Cape Comorin. If there is anything you would like to do or see this morning, you have only to command me."

"But what about your work?" I asked, remembering the rows of text-books in a dozen languages at the offices in Calcutta and Madras.

"My work is to be at your service," Mr. Nair repeated impressively.

I abandoned my protests; the advantages of such an escort were too palpable to be missed. Here at last was someone who would not think that I didn't appreciate Gandhi if I asked for a change from Basic Schools and rural industries.

"Can you show me something beautiful?" I said.

"Beautiful?" reiterated Mr. Nair, looking puzzled. I hastened to explain.

"I don't mean that this place isn't beautiful. It's one of the loveliest places I have ever been in. But I've seen a great deal of social work in India, and I should like to learn something more of its art and literature."

"That will be easy," said Mr. Nair. "We will go to see the Art Gallery."

A Government car appeared as though a genie had summoned it, and we drove to the tall white building known as the Sri

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Chitralayam which stood in an ornamental garden laid out with fountains and clipped shrubs. George Paine, suddenly realising that the day was Sunday, had gone to a small Anglican Church outside the hotel grounds. Barry accompanied us, though he felt, I suspected, more at home in rural ashrams than in municipal art galleries. He had developed a tendency to talk scornfully of "ivory towers" whenever I showed signs of a growing allergy towards social centres.

The Sri Chitralayam, a collection assembled by the artist and scholar Dr. Jayaram H. Cousins, proved to be a source of real refreshment. Here were pictures representing the various eras of Indian painting, with additional rooms containing examples of Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan and Javanese art. In the Indian collection I noticed several pictures from Santiniketan, where the youngest generation of painters had been trained by Nandalal Bose.

When I persuaded myself to leave, Mr. Nair led me to the Visitors' Book; beneath my name I expressed the hope that some international body, such as UNESCO, would arrange for printed reproductions to be made of the best pictures so that Western art-lovers who would never visit Trivandrum might see them. On our way back to the hotel we stopped for a short time in the Government Gardens, where bougainvillea and "flame of the forest" provided a riotous screen for the municipal Museum and Zoo. This Zoo was the only place throughout India in which I saw either a tiger or a snake.

That afternoon, accompanied by our official guide, we left the hotel in the Government car for a drive of fifty-four miles to India's Land's End, Cape Comorin. This famous headland, known to Indians as Kanya Kumari, was the *comaria akron* of Ptolemy, the Hellenic map-maker. Local handbooks advertised it as the only place in the world from which a traveller could watch the sun both rise and set without changing his position.

The longest concrete road in India linked Trivandrum with the Cape. It left the outskirts of the city for rich plains of coconuts and rice, but unlike the country road which had taken us to Madura through a similar landscape, it was never free from those intermittent human habitations known to the West as "ribbon development." The people living in mud-huts and

## *Farthest South*

working at the roadside looked more placid and better nourished than the tense, half-starved workers in the North. This Garden of Eden seemed to be free from the poverty which had impaired the urban beauty of Madras ; in Trivandrum I had seen no beggars.

Between Udayagiri and Nagercoil, the largest town on our route, the beauty of the fertile region took on a fairy-tale unreality. The road, bordered at intervals by lotus-covered tanks, wound through the paddy-lands known as the granary of the South. These far-extending rice-fields were irrigated by the great Pechippara Dam, the central point of a scheme which had turned the dry lands of Southern Travancore into the productive plains of Nanjarad. This miracle of irrigation, though extended by modern resources, was not new to South India. A thousand years earlier the ancient engineers of the Pandyan rulers had constructed a dam of massive squared stones across the Paralayar, and had cut a channel two miles long through the solid rock.

We stopped only once on the drive to Cape Comorin, for the main purpose of our journey was to watch the sunset. This break came at Padmanabhapuram, the old capital of the State with its ancient Fort and pagoda-shaped Palace. Here the Maharajahs of Travancore had lived, and the great Rajah Martanda Varma had put down the rebel Pillamars.

Two years earlier my husband, guided by the official in charge of the Trivandrum Art Gallery, Dr. Vasudeva Puduval, had also looked upon the face of the locally-constructed clock, one of the oldest in India, which quietly ticked away the hours above the fifteenth-century courtyard. He too climbed the stairs, steep and narrow as the ladder to the boat-deck of a ship, which reached the state bedchamber used by the bygone rulers of Travancore. They had slept on enormous solid beds, the gift of Dutch colonists, set up on smooth black floors of polished lacquer. To-day the heavy windows of latticed sandalwood and the dark mural paintings showing the lives of the gods created an almost tangible atmosphere of historic gloom, intensified rather than dispelled by the tiny brass oil lamps hanging symbolically above the huge beds.

As we drove on towards Nagercoil, the afternoon sunshine on the modern road seemed vital and reassuring. Already the countryside had changed to rocky, undulating ground, skirting

### *Search After Sunrise*

the rugged humps of the Western Ghats which peter out into the sea beyond Cape Comorin, and make navigation dangerous within ten miles of the coast. Tapioca was cultivated here instead of rice ; the coconut palms, with their long leaves like green peacocks' tails, were replaced by oil-producing palmyras, tall, thin, and scrubby.

At Nagercoil the sign of the hammer and sickle on a house wall appeared as a gesture of incongruous defiance, for this largely Christian town was not only the Travancore headquarters of the London Missionary Society, but in its oldest section known as Kottar was traditionally connected with St. Francis Xavier. Popular belief insisted that the little St. Francis chapel there was built by the saint, who had lived in a hut on the same site. He made so many converts in Travancore, estimated by himself at ten thousand, that his name had become part of the story of the State. Actually he spent only three months there while travelling from Cape Comorin to Quilon.

Beside the Cape itself, a landscape of grey rocks, yellow sand, and blue-grey water with a green backcloth of hills, we passed a Hindu temple on a promontory within the customary striped enclosure. At this point, three of the earth's greatest oceans meet ; to the east lies the Bay of Bengal, to the South the Indian Ocean, and to the west the Arabian Sea. A high wind, like the trade winds in Jamaica, pounded the waves against the rocks.

West of the temple stood the Government guest-house where we were to spend the night ; still further west, a Catholic monastery wore the chrome and vermilion of Southern architecture. As I put down my suitcase in a ground-floor room with simple furniture and two large windows looking south and east over the sea, I wished I could stay in the place for weeks. Behind the bedroom extended a dressing-room large enough for a family ; the well-scrubbed bathroom beyond it held a tin hip-bath and china jug and basin. From the open windows a cool breeze blew through all three rooms straight off the water. Being as usual the only female, I had this spacious series of apartments to myself.

We ate hurriedly the generous tea provided, for sunset was near. George Paine strode eastward to the many-coloured sandy beach beyond the temple ; Henri Roser retired to meditate ; Barry plunged into the rocky swimming pool, half man-made and

### *Farthest South*

half natural, where the coastal path ended which linked the hotel with the shore. Inspired by the same impulse towards solitude, I crossed to the longest promontory that I could see, and sat there facing westwards. Due east, across the Gulf of Manar, lay unseen Ceylon. Some day, I thought, I would go there too.

As the sun began to sink the colours of sea and sky changed perpetually, like the blues and greens and subtle reds of an opal. Two furlongs from the shore jutted the isolated rock where Vivekananda, the disciple of Ramakrishna, had sat in contemplation for three days and nights before deciding to work in the United States. I was not surprised that he had chosen this end of the earth for his meditations.

The setting sun, a perfect red-gold undimmed by clouds, descended over the southern tip of India. At last it plunged so suddenly beneath the water that it produced the illusion of a giant orange flung by the Creator's hand into the Arabian Sea.

## XV—METAMORPHOSIS OF A RULER

"The only way in which the Princes can live in a free India is for them now to recognise the time-spirit, bow to it and act accordingly."

Mahatma Gandhi.

AS I STOOD LOOKING at the place where the sun had disappeared, the young official guide came over the rocks. Unnoticed by me he had been standing at a respectful distance, apparently on guard against some unforeseen mishap.

"It was worth coming to see that," I said. "Do you get many British visitors nowadays in Travancore?"

"No, very few. There are still British who manage tea plantations high up in the Western Ghats."

"What sort of people are they?"

"They are very courageous, but some of them are said to treat their servants with little kindness." Lest I should misunderstand him, he added hastily: "I respect the British. In spite of the past, most Indians have a high regard for them. We realise it would have been much worse to be dominated by any other Power."

"I suppose most of them have gone home by now," I said.

"Not all have gone. Quite a number went to Pakistan."

"And what do you think they're doing there?"

He reflected. "I do not believe that they are doing any harm. The time when that happened is past. I think they have gone only to find work. Muslims are less literate than Hindus, so there are more jobs."

Less literate? I remembered that the literacy rate in India was only between 12 and 15 per cent of the population. What then was the Pakistan figure? As we walked up the rocky path together, the guide told me that Travancore had been more deeply influenced by the West and its Christianity than any other Indian State. Recalling St. Francis Xavier and the legendary wanderings of St. Thomas in South India, I was not surprised.

Next morning the sun disappointed us; it rose from a screen of clouds and provided no spectacle. Soon after breakfast we started back, for in the late afternoon there was, inevitably, a large public meeting in the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall at which

### *Metamorphosis of a Ruler*

we were all scheduled to speak. A strong wind still blew the roaring sea on to the rocks ; the thin palmyras tossed their heads against a cloudy sky.

This time we made several stops ; the first came at Suchindram, named for the god Indra—" the place where Indra's sins were forgiven." Only the previous month the annual car festival had been celebrated here ; three movable temples, one a thousand years old in which the image of the god had been dragged round the village, still stood in the street on their enormous wheels. Each construction, I was told, required a hundred persons to drag it along. Modern monstrosities, in the form of green, red and yellow wooden gargoyles with huge teeth and goggle eyes, had been added to the intricate carvings on the biggest temple car.

The large permanent temple, dedicated with its impressive *gopuram* to the Hindu Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, resembled a minor Madura. A series of carvings over the main door portrayed this *Trimurti*, less diabolical than the elephant heads and gryphons which surrounded them. The enclosing wall was striped white and terra-cotta, like the wrapping on a chocolate-box. A smaller temple standing in the middle of a sacred bathing-pool might have been one of the pseudo-Indian summer pavilions which serve tea and coffee to Bank Holiday crowds in English seaside towns. As we returned to the car, I noticed a woman sitting outside the main temple ; her gold earrings were so heavy that the lobes of her ears had been pulled into two grotesque lengths of skin at least an inch deep.

Near Nagercoil we observed Salvation Army officers in bright red coats, mingling on their bicycles with the gathering procession of cars, goats, donkeys, buffaloes, bullocks, pigs, and pariah dogs. The Salvationists had established a headquarters here in 1892 ; since then they had made many converts. Their meeting house facing the road was prominently labelled :

#### THE SALVATION ARMY—BOOTH-TUCKER.

Turning off the metalled highway, the driver took a dirt road leading to Neyyoor. Our next stop, at the London Missionary Society's Hospital, showed us a sad contrast to the ceremonial gaudiness of Suchindram. We could spend only a few

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moments looking over the bare wards with their mingled odours, their philosophical but sullen-faced cancer cases, and the "private rooms" which seemed to offer little for a patient's money but privacy itself. Brief though it was, our concern appeared to be almost unique.

"This is the most famous hospital in South India," our guide assured us, but as I signed my name in the Visitors' Book offered by the presiding doctor, I noticed that the last visitors to record their signatures had arrived in 1946.

"That place off the beaten track needs more and more people to come and see it," I reflected as we drove away. "British magnates, American millionaires, lecturers who will tour the world raising funds as Rabindranath raised them for Santiniketan; anyone who will cover those bare cots with sheets and blankets, put pictures on the walls and mats on the floor, bring the healing breath of life-saving drugs into those melancholy wards! India can't do it yet. She's too poor to afford even one show-place."

Our final stop, at the Y.M.C.A. Rural Demonstration Centre in Martandam, proved to be more reassuring, though Barry reminded me throughout our visit of the reluctance to inspect any further rural industries which I had indiscreetly expressed before we arrived there. This modest but cheerful hut, with its well-stocked garden, provided the inspiration for a programme of reconstruction in the villages throughout the State; their inhabitants were taught to grow mulberry trees and rear silkworms, cultivate tapioca, keep bees, dig latrines, fit pulleys to wells, spin and weave. One classroom displayed the picture of a large fish, supplied with an appropriate caption by the Madras Fisheries Information Bureau:

"Do you own a pond or any piece of water? Grow fish in it and reap a rich crop with big annual returns."

This centre, we learned, had started its work in 1923; here were yet more pioneers who pre-dated Gandhi. He had in fact received many of his own ideas for rural reconstruction from the work of the Y.M.C.A.

After lunch at the Mascot Hotel, a telephone call came through for our delegation. As all three men appeared to be shaving or sleeping, I took it.



## *Metamorphosis of a Ruler*

"This is the Secretary at the Palace speaking. His Highness the Maharajah will be much honoured if you and your fellow-delegates will dine with him at 8.30 this evening."

"I'm sure we shall all be delighted," I said, remembering that the previous morning we had signed our names in the Visitors' Book at the Maharajah's Residence, a courtesy expected of every newcomer to Trivandrum. Then a disconcerting thought struck me. "But I'm afraid I haven't brought an evening dress here. We were asked to travel light, and in any case I have to leave Trivandrum by air, so I left all my heavy luggage in Madras. I'm sure," I added, thinking of all the collarless shirts and khaki shorts which had surrounded me at the Conference, "that none of the men have evening dress either."

"It does not matter," said the voice after the tiniest possible pause. "His Highness fully understands that nowadays people who must travel in aeroplanes cannot carry much luggage. He will issue instructions that no one is to change."

Aeroplanes, his tone implied, were an unfortunate development of modern civilisation. As I went to tell the others of this invitation, I was not sure that he was wrong. His Highness, it appeared, rode in a golden car drawn by six white horses to the festivals in the Padmanabhaswami Temple, called after his ancestor, Martanda Varma. In 1750 this great Rajah, already a legend, had taken the title Sri Padmanabha Dasa, "Servant of God," after dedicating his territory to the Deity in the temple and assuming the management of the State as His disciple.

Half an hour later, the telephone rang again. This time the caller asked for me by name.

"I am indeed sorry to trouble you," said the same polite voice, "but I have a very delicate question to put to you. I shall be greatly obliged if you can help me."

"I'll certainly do my best," I said, wondering what was coming.

A deprecating cough sounded over the line.

"Can you advise me which of the gentlemen delegates is the senior in rank? It is a question of seating at the table."

"Well," I answered, "you can take your choice. Two are clergymen, and one's a cooperative farmer. The Reverend George Paine of Boston is seventy-five; I think you'd be quite safe in treating him as the senior delegate."

## *Search After Sunrise*

"I thank you indeed. And the two others?"

"One is a Frenchman, Pastor Roser. The farmer comes from New Zealand."

"I am greatly obliged to you." The voice at the other end problem relieved. Evidently the information had solved his sounded.

An hour later, the gentlemen delegates and I arrived at the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall. There, under the Chairmanship of the new Vice-Chancellor of Trivandrum University, Sri V. K. Nandan Menon, we addressed a surging audience which packed the floor and crowded into the doors and windows. They listened with rapt attention to George Paine speaking of a visit to Russia, Henri Roser describing the French Resistance, and Barry explaining community work in New Zealand. But I had chanced—rashly, as it afterwards proved—upon what I believed to be a still better idea. I had brought with me to Trivandrum my husband's book, *In the Path of Mahatma Gandhi*; it contained some appreciative sections on his visit to Travancore. Before giving a talk on the importance to writers of freedom of speech and travel, I decided to quote the most laudatory paragraphs.

" 'The administration of Travancore, if paternal, is progressive,' " I read. " 'A delightful woman member of the legislature, with whom I take tea, tells me that not only are there women legislators but women police and—lest this be taken as no assured sign of progress—that Travancore boasts the highest educational level anywhere in India, the highest literacy rate and fine agricultural research stations. I see before me a very fine metalled road.

" 'But what interests me more is to look at the Indian aspects of the scene, the waterways with their primitive boats drawn alongside, the substantial houses made of adobe and roofed with palm leaves, the rich red earth through which the road passes and on which the crowded and lofty palms stand. To see this, and to scent the warm refreshing smell of earth and vegetation after rain, is what is good. The steaming heat even of April is no discomfort to me. Here, I say to myself, I could live as I choose, write poetry, be happy. One would not have to be a Gauguin to find satisfaction in living in Tahiti or Travancore.' "

As I had expected, the applause thus vicariously earned was riotous. You can speak to the most intelligent audience in the

## *Metamorphosis of a Ruler*

world about Greenland, or the Antarctic, or Timbuctoo ; what really interests them is the next street. But the experiment had embarrassing consequences. When the meeting ended, a vociferous crowd surrounded me. Would I, while I was in Trivandrum, address their school, their club, their college, their study circle, their art class, their literary centre ? To my relief, patiently waiting at the back of the hall to find out, as usual, if he could be of service to me, I saw Mr. Nair.

I broke through the crowd and ran to him.

" Mr. Nair," I said, " about twenty or thirty people want me to speak for them. I've only got one more day in Trivandrum. I can't speak for them all. What am I to do ? "

" If you leave your programme to me, I will arrange it," said Mr. Nair.

" You really mean you'll deal with these people for me ? "

" I will do so with pleasure. Please refer them all to me, and I will make a programme which will not waste your time."

Thankfully leaving the problem with him, I returned to the hotel and changed into the least crumpled of my much-packed silk dresses, while the men, in honour of our host, found substitutes for shorts. We arrived at the Kaudiyar Palace quite inappropriately attired for a State dinner party, but looking rather less than usual like a set of dissipated tramps.

Before arriving in Travancore, I had already learned that one of the Indian Government's most successful achievements was its handling of the Princes who ruled the former States. Later, with the help of official publications, I was able to supplement my knowledge. Both official and unofficial information showed that the credit for this substantial accomplishment lies with the late Sardar Patel, but so far it has been virtually ignored by the Press outside India.

Up to the date of liberation, India had been divided into British India and " Indian India." From the standpoint of the claimants to freedom the second term was ironic, for " Indian India " included the most backward areas of the country, in which the régimes of ruling Princes had imposed feudal standards upon the millions under their control. Amongst such States, Travancore was an exception ; for generations its ruling family had been intelligent and responsible, and their administration progressive. Like Cochin and the Kathiawar Peninsula, it was also among the

### *Search After Sunrise*

few States which were not land-locked islands inside India, and dependent upon her for all their trade.

Before 15th August, 1947, the map of India showed 584 States with a total population of 91 millions. They ranged in size from Hyderabad, where the Nizam ruled over 16½ million people and collected an annual revenue of 100 million rupees, to Bilbari with an annual revenue of 80 rupees and a population of 27.

"The former alien rulers of India preserved them like pickles," Patel observed drily of the smaller States in a speech at Jaipur.

Shortly before liberation various rumours—started, perhaps, by interested persons—ran round England and India regarding the probable response of the Princes to independence. They would fly at each others' throats, said one report. They were longing for the British to leave, ran another, so that they could take over the country and reduce its population to serfdom. At every public meeting on India, the future of the Princes became a subject of uneasy discussion.

By the time that I reached Travancore, most of the States had been absorbed into the Indian Union. Only in Hyderabad and Kashmir had a shot been fired; Kashmir alone remained unsettled. For some years a feeling had developed in India that the smaller States were feudal anachronisms which should be abolished as political units, and form new unions or merge with the nearest Province. In the larger States, several rulers had accepted the growing demand for responsible Government. Even before the transfer of power, Cochin, Mysore, Gwalior and Baroda had decided to join India.

The "Bloodless Revolution" which virtually abolished the States was finally carried out by an Instrument of Accession which disarmed suspicion. Patel handled the Princes tactfully; the peoples of the States already knew him as their champion. In December, 1947, he expressed his gratitude to these rulers, who had shown "a commendable appreciation of the realities of the situation and a benevolent regard for public good . . . None is more conscious than myself that all this could not have been achieved but for their willing co-operation and their intense patriotism, which was latent but which has just blossomed forth in all its fullness with the acquisition of independence."

## *Metamorphosis of a Ruler*

There had been, he added, "no compulsion save that of events."

Events, however, were very compelling; this benevolent, if belated, regard for the public good was one of their consequences. Feudalism in India was dead, though its "face" might be saved by the retention of some decorative trappings, such as gold cars for festivals and the title of "Highness." In March, 1948, the Prime Minister referred to Patel's "grand achievement." Because he had succeeded, the former subjects of the Princes were now living under democratic institutions, with the right to vote and to choose their representatives.

The official booklet, *Indian States Today*, which records these changes, describes them with a discreet enthusiasm less disingenuous than it appears. Its lavish flattery of the Rulers does not wholly disguise the acute political shrewdness by which Patel induced them to perceive that their patriotism, "latent" for a somewhat lengthy period, had better become "intense" without further delay. Obliging the official writer explains.

"He reconciled their interests in such a manner that both the Rulers and the ruled obtained the substance of what they wanted and were prepared to compromise where necessary."

Thanks to this acumen, which satisfied the dispossessed Princes by leaving them the shadow of their power, but also pleased the people who realised that the shadow was no longer the substance, the Indian States had been reduced in number from 584 to 30.

The Maharajah of Travancore, wisely deciding to march with history, quickly followed the lead given by Cochin. On 1st July, 1949, the Union of Travancore and Cochin had been inaugurated with a Constitution similar to that of other States in the Indian Union. The Maharajah became the Rajpramukh, or Governor for life, of the combined State, losing only the hereditary rights formerly vested in his family. He now functioned as the constitutional head, aided and advised by a Council of Ministers responsible to the Legislature. This meant a marked change in the internal constitution of Travancore. Although many powers were still legally vested in the Rajpramukh, in practice the government was now carried on according to the democratic principle of ministerial responsibility.

Darkness had already come when we drove up to the Palace, but I knew from my previous visit that it was a white building

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three storeys high, with a wide frontage beneath two pagoda-shaped turrets crowned with pinnacles. Its numerous windows faced a sloping lawn, linked by a short flight of steps to the terrace adorned with boxes of shrubs and flowering plants. In the big circular drawing-room adjoining the hall with its regal staircase stood the Maharajah, Sir Bala Rama Varma, surrounded by his mother, brother, sister, brother-in-law, and several guests. He came forward and held out his hand with a cordiality which seemed spontaneous.

Before the evening ended, I felt no surprise that this vivacious, lightly-built, young-looking man of thirty-eight, with strongly-marked eyebrows above keen intelligent eyes, had been among the first to accept Gandhi's advice and bow to the time-spirit. His small tooth-brush moustache and closely-fitting white uniform, cut like a frock-coat, suggested a stage version of militarism, but beneath his diffident affability I sensed a perceptive shrewdness. He had evidently foreseen the imminent changes, and unlike the less enlightened Princes who exploited their subjects, had known how to adapt himself to the compulsion of events without loss of income or prestige.

As soon as I heard his clipped, fluent Oxford-English I assumed that the Maharajah had been educated at a British University, but I learned that his proficiency in languages, which also included Sanscrit and Malayalam, had been derived from Indian and European tutors. A tour of Europe in 1933 had made him the first Ruler of Travancore to go overseas. His four months abroad had given him a knowledge of European eating habits ; that evening there was no wearisome wait for food while we tried to sustain polite conversation. Drinks were served immediately we arrived, and a dinner worthy of the Savoy followed without delay.

We sat down in a long room with walls distempered white beneath a coloured frieze. Like the rest of the Palace, it was furnished with taste but without extravagance. As the only woman among the foreign guests, I sat beside the Maharajah. On the opposite side of the table George Paine was duly placed in the seat of honour next to the Maharani Sethu Parvathi Bai, the Prince's handsome mother only sixteen years his senior.

It was obviously she to whom the Maharajah owed his cul-

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tured sophistication ; as a keen reader and music-lover, she had earned the title " D.Litt. of Travancore." Her son had inherited his position when only twelve years old ; for some years she had acted as Regent, and was now known as " the Queen Mother." No tradition of female subjection existed in Travancore ; throughout the centuries this State had maintained a matriarchal system of inheritance. The sons of a ruling Maharajah did not succeed their father ; the heir to the throne had been the eldest son of the Ruler's sister, known as " the First Prince." It was not the Maharajah but his attractive sister who had been deprived by the Indian Government of ancestral rights.

The Maharajah conversed with an urbane sprightliness. First he questioned me about England ; then he asked for my impressions of India, and appeared genuinely interested when I gave them. At last he mentioned *In the Path of Mahatma Gandhi*, with its passages complimentary to his personality and State.

" Now that you have seen Travancore," he suggested, " you will be able to check your husband's book."

" Were there so many mistakes ? " I inquired.

" Oh, no ! I believe not," he answered politely.

In the morning my three companions departed, leaving me in Trivandrum to get the plane back to Madras next day. They had planned a visit to another local ashram ; after that Henri had designs on French-speaking settlements in the South, and George was returning to the United States by a series of air journeys which would take him from Ceylon through South-East Asia and Japan. Only Barry would rejoin me ; we should meet in Bombay before making our joint expedition to Pakistan.

I was not long alone. Hardly had I said good-bye to my friends when Mr. Nair, punctual and faithful, rose from his usual seat at the corner of the verandah. In his hand was my day's programme of nine engagements ; they included, I found with some alarm, no less than five speeches. By that time I had learned to live and write with comfort in a temperature of 90 degrees, but speaking in it for hours on end required some practice.

" Only a few words are necessary in each place," Mr. Nair reassured me. " They merely want to be able to say that they have seen and heard you."

He went on to give me some useful details about each

### *Search After Sunrise*

institution on the list. This needed waking up ; that was Communist-inclined ; a third could be spoken to freely without indiscretion.

We started off in the official car for the first engagement ; this, I noted with surprise, was a visit to the Aquarium on the seashore. Here, presumably, the fish would entertain me, rather than I them. Observing the shimmering creatures, so strangely unreal in their illuminated tanks, I credited Mr. Nair with the desire to prove that Trivandrum could give as well as get.

From the fish I went to address the students and staff of Trivandrum Training College ; they listened benevolently while I spoke of English as the medium not only of a great literature, but a valuable means of communication in a country with twelve major languages. Hindi, spoken by about eighty millions, now seemed likely to become the official language of law, politics, and administration. Twenty to thirty millions, spread throughout the country, had some knowledge of English ; Bengali itself, India's most literary language, was known to no more than fifty-four million. It would be a pity, I said, and the audience agreed, if a language so widely comprehended as English was ousted by nationalistic fervour.

The next assignment was much tougher ; it involved a talk to the students of the new Mahatma Gandhi College on the hills above Trivandrum. Here I gathered that I should meet some examples of the frustrated youth on whose behalf Hiralal Bose, the Secretary of our Conference, was to found an Indian Youth Service the following April. At that time many young Indians were complaining of personal problems and lack of opportunity ; in spite of explanations by the Prime Minister and others that the new India needed workers rather than political demonstrators, some had resorted to violence in order to obtain the social and economic justice which they claimed as their due.

Unconsciously, it seemed, they were searching for some creative ideal, based on moral values, by which they could be inspired. Their College had perhaps been named to remind them that such an ideal had already been given to India, though since Gandhi's death a custom had developed of renaming roads and buildings after him. Nehru deplored this habit ; it represented, he thought, " a very cheap form of memorial," which gave " a



### *Metamorphosis of a Ruler*

certain satisfaction without expense or exertion." He particularly regretted it when the names discarded had their own historical or literary distinction.

The new College was not abandoning an ancient name, since it had hitherto possessed no name at all. The breezy elevation on which it stood, commanding a view of mountain ranges and the rich Travancore plain, was still littered with bricks and cement. But it seemed to me that the young students had as yet to earn their right to use Gandhi's name. Eager and expectant, but noisily undisciplined, they crowded to their seats in large numbers which I was not sure that I could hold.

So I began by telling them of an occasion on which I had been chosen as the annual Public Orator at the University of Aberystwyth, where the students cherish a traditional right to interrupt their visitor, distinguished or otherwise, for the first fifteen minutes of his oration. Although I believed that I was the first woman to be invited for this function, my vocal chords had survived the time-honoured masculine onslaught.

"But that speech," I told the shuffling, talkative boys, "was the only one I had to make that day. If you treat me in the same way now, I can't guarantee that I shall have any voice left for the three speeches still on my programme."

This appeal produced quiet, and I went on to talk of Gandhi and what he had meant to the West, and how the West believed that he had intended to use the freedom of India which he had won. There was silence when I had finished and then the students applauded, but whether the short speech meant anything to them I had no means of knowing.

The remainder of the day proved less exacting. At the Women's College—the only one in the State—the Principal asked merely that I should accompany her round the crescent-shaped building, and watch eight girls illustrate the Indian National Anthem by a typical Malabar dance. The Swathi Thirunal Music Academy was partly closed, and wanted only a signature in the Visitors' Book. More rewarding was a visit to the Public Library, the oldest in India, founded over a century earlier by Alexander Cadogan.

Alexander had been the second son of the Lady Cadogan whose father was Sir Hans Sloane, the physician and speculative builder who gave his name to large sections of Chelsea, and was

commemorated by an ornate tombstone which survived unimpaired when a land-mine destroyed the Old Church beside it. How strange to find this connection between our home in Cheyne Walk, one of the eighteenth-century Sir Hans's speculations, and a library in Travancore !

The courteous librarian showed me some books by my husband, and brought several of my own from his shelves for me to sign. A Visitors' Book, also produced for my signature, recorded a visit in 1938 by Somerset Maugham ; he too had spent an hour there and autographed his books. My husband, I recalled, had told me that *The Razor's Edge* described a hill near Trivandrum.

I should have liked to linger in the Library, but the overwhelming day was wearing on. A third address followed to the English Literary Association at the small white-walled University—the youngest in India, for it had opened only in 1937.

The hour was nearing 7.30 when I returned to my hotel ; by that time I had also spoken to the combined Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. on the probable result of the recently-announced British General Election, and conducted a discussion on post-war aspects of Indian literature with a local group of authors and college professors.

“ It is indeed a matter for congratulation that such excellent discipline has prevailed at your meetings,” Mr. Nair remarked courteously as we drove away from the last one. I realised only then the disturbing possibilities which had lurked behind some of these engagements. At least, I thought as I sat down to dinner, I've done something to earn the generous hospitality of the State of Travancore.

After another meeting next morning at a College hostel, the Government car drove me to the Sankhumukham Airport on the shore three miles from Trivandrum. At midday my plane was due to leave for Madras, where I had promised to address the local Branch of the All-India Women's Conference before going west to Bombay.

With me to the airport went a member of the local reception committee and the loyal Mr. Nair, who for three days had played, as though born to it, the part of Evangelist in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. As both men adorned me with garlands, I said good-bye to him with real regret ; one day, I hoped, I

### *Metamorphosis of a Ruler*

should return to this lovely city, and again benefit from his dignified and efficient guidance.

The little aeroplane, air-borne more quickly than the larger machines to which I had grown accustomed, seemed to rise instantly above the long white strip of the airport lying between the palms and the sea. We flew out westwards over the water, and then turned north towards Cochin along the sandy coast.

## XVI—THE GATEWAY OF INDIA

“ Let us not linger to look back for the  
laggards, or benumb the quickening  
hours with dread and doubt.

For thy time is our time and thy  
burden is our own and life and  
death are but thy breath playing  
upon the eternal sea of Life.”

Rabindranath Tagore.

IN THE AEROPLANE I removed the two fragrant garlands and laid them carefully on my suitcase. Though one was made of pink roses and silver tissue, and the other of scarlet and orange bougainvillea, they did not appear to clash.

When we had made the ascent and were flying steadily, I set down in my notebook some hints for travellers taught me by my experience of the South.

1. Never put on shoes or undergarments without shaking them first.
2. Never walk in the dark with bare feet. You may step on a cockroach, a scorpion, or even a snake.
3. Always cover a glass of water standing beside the bed. If you forget to cover it, do not drink it in the dark or you may swallow a spider or mosquito.
4. Keep a bottle of ammonia handy for immediate application to bites.

This flight was not one of those which attempted to establish a speed record. The plane took nearly five hours to reach Madras, for it followed a circular route in order to include stops at Cochin, Coimbatore, and Bangalore. Stretching inland from the flat orange-coloured beach a thousand feet below, I could see palm-fringed backwaters and inlets with miniature fishing-boats on their surface. An iridescent green scum, which suggested crocodiles and snakes, covered the water. Which would benefit if we crashed into one of those jungle swamps—cobras, alligators, or tigers ?

The plane showed no sign of making any such experiment ;

## *The Gateway of India*

an hour from Trivandrum it sailed easily into Cochin. Here an inlet of the Arabian Sea was divided by Wellington Island, recently reclaimed from a backwater cut off from the ocean by a bar of sand. On the mainland opposite the island, white houses with gabled roofs and palm-decked gardens recalled the fact that Cochin had once been Dutch and later British. The city also contained a large Jewish quarter; white Jews lived there who claimed to be part of the tribe of Manasseh driven from Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

From a copy of the *Indian Express* which I took from the pocket of the chair in front of me, I learned that Britain's coming General Election was definitely fixed for 23rd February.

"Good," I thought. "I shall be back in time to vote, but not soon enough to make more speeches."

My twenty fellow-travellers, who all appeared to be Indians, seemed quite unmoved by this news of political upheavals overseas. Many were asleep, for the afternoon atmosphere in the small plane was warm and somnolent. We had now left Cochin, with its little backwaters busily trading in coconuts, coir, and copra, for wilder scenery. As the plane climbed to cross the great range of the Nilgiris between Malabar and Mysore, the air became bumpy and uncomfortable.

Seen from above the mountains appeared a pale orange in colour, thickly covered with unidentifiable trees of a green too pale for fir or pine. I learned afterwards that teak and sandalwood composed these mountain forests, inhabited by tigers, bison and wild elephants. Beyond them lay a barren range, sunlit with deep purple shadows, which took the plane ten minutes to cross. It was reassuring to leave the air-pockets and come down at Coimbatore, a town of widely-separated industrial plants and chimneys spread across the terra-cotta earth of the mountain-ringed plain. Half an hour later we stopped again at Bangalore, the mild and pleasant capital of Mysore 3,000 feet above sea-level, with its elegant green parks. Here stood the Maharajah's Palace, and the Indian Institute of Science founded by the Tata family.

Twenty-five minutes late, the plane arrived at Madras where the Sarans' car awaited me. As I was due to address an informal gathering of women on their verandah within fifteen minutes, the airport officials obligingly waived the usual

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formalities. Next morning, garlanded with tinsel and tassels, I appeared before the Madras Branch of the All-India Women's Conference with Mrs. Raksha Saran in the Chair. Though a large and decorative hall had been chosen for this annual meeting its acoustics were poor, but a woman Member of the Legislative Assembly who tackled the Hindu Code Bill like a dynamo rode down such obstacles with scorn. The flood of her oratory was still in full spate when I left to pick up my air-ticket for Bombay at Thomas Cook's office. Indian women had travelled far since C. F. Andrews first attempted to rally them, in 1917, on behalf of the female victims of indentured labour in Fiji.

At dawn I left the Sarans' house for the direct plane to Bombay; the University there had invited me to deliver an afternoon lecture on Friday, 13th January. The inauspicious date brought no ill-luck. In a larger machine than the little plane which linked Trivandrum and Madras, we sailed smoothly at 10,000 feet over the Velaigomda Hills and the brown inland plains. Above Poona, set on a rocky plateau, I tried to locate the Aga Khan's Palace where Gandhi, with his fellow-rebels, had been imprisoned from August 1942 until May 1944.

Before noon we reached Bombay's airport at Santa Cruz, built on Salsette Island south of Kanheri Hill. Fifteen hundred years earlier, a company of Buddhist monks had chiselled a monastery here from the solid rock. As we circled the airport I observed its close ring of rugged hills, which in poor visibility offered many risks to pilots. Those risks had become real during the previous monsoon, when a Dutch plane had crashed with a party of American journalists which included the star reporter, H. R. Knickerbocker.

Waiting at the airport was Sophia Wadia; she hung a light garland of tuberose round my neck and took me to her car. During the drive into Bombay, I asked her if she had known any of the journalists who died in the crash. She had not, but told me that the plane carrying them was getting ready to land when it was ordered to make way for other traffic by circling the airport. Blinded by rain the pilot, unfamiliar with the area, had collided with a hill lying north of the city.

"Since then," she said, "the risks of this airport have been discussed more than ever. Even a proposal to level the hills has been considered."

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" Couldn't the airport be taken further out ? " I suggested.

" It could, but it's fourteen miles away already. To take it further would probably mean a specially constructed railway and a new station. But that would be cheaper than levelling the hills."

The chauffeur drove us to her home, " Aryasangha," on Malabar Hill beyond Back Bay. She and her husband, the Theosophist B. P. Wadia, had presented this house to the Theosophical movement, keeping for themselves only two or three rooms on the upper floor. Outside their windows a big stone verandah overlooked a square of garden, kept permanently green by a hose which sprinkled the grass and the clumps of cannas, bougainvillea, and milk-blue plumbago. Their front rooms faced the western sea ; from the small waves lapping the brown rocks a cool breeze blew into the house.

At luncheon I met B. P. Wadia, a giant compared with most Indians, spectacled, bearded and benevolent. Either he or Sophia must have some private wealth, I concluded, observing the fine china on the table and the choice furniture, though the house with its restrained elegance made no attempt to compete with the much-adorned millionaires' palaces which surrounded it on Malabar Hill. Rather it typified the culture which had grown to fruition, as part of her long history, in India's greater cities.

" How many Basic Schools do I visit here ? " I inquired over lunch. Sophia only smiled and shook her head. Dedicated Gandhian though she was, she had agreed with me at Sevagram that an almost unbroken diet of schools, social centres, and rural industries was not equally well-suited to all the Conference delegates. Nor could Gandhi's social revolution be justly appreciated unless it was seen in relation to the rich cultural background against which it had been conceived.

" At Bombay," she had said, " you shall see another side of India. I'll make a programme, so that you can see as much as possible and do your shopping without any loss of time."

Sophia understood the value of time ; she was one of the few individuals I knew who made the utmost use of it. Among the many remarkable women whom I met in India, she remained conspicuous owing to a balanced personality which owed much to her European background. She had been born

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in France early in the century, and educated in Paris and at Columbia University in New York. In 1928, when she was still living in the United States, came the chance which caused her to identify her life with India.

During that year she had attended, out of curiosity, a lecture given by the travelling Indian Theosophist, B. P. Wadia. Although neither India nor Theosophy might have been supposed at that date to offer much of a future to a brilliant Frenchwoman, Sophia found herself captivated by both the lecturer and his creed. She married B. P. Wadia, joined the Theosophical movement, and after a year or two came with her husband to Bombay. So determined and successful had been her adaptation, that in any gathering she was now indistinguishable from Indian women with similar standards. She always wore sarees, usually white; against them her sun-tanned Latin skin appeared as Eastern as her husband's.

Sophia not only adjusted herself to India; she made her mark on it as an Indian. At the United Lodge of Theosophists run by her husband in Esplanade Road, recently renamed Mahatma Gandhi Road, she became his most successful lecturer. On several occasions I visited this Centre, described in one of its publications as "an independent group of students of the immemorial truths which form the spiritual heritage of the race and of which all religions are partial formulations." I found that Sophia's lectures attracted large audiences, drawn not from the well-intentioned but often devitalised middle-aged women who so largely support religious bodies in the West, but from a young and enthusiastic student group composed mostly of men. Among them I met the slight, delicate-looking boy, Raghavan Iyer, who had just won the only Rhodes Scholarship offered annually to Indians, and next autumn would be going up to Oxford.

But Theosophical instruction, though a valuable corrective for communal bitterness, was far from being Sophia's only occupation. She saw such instruction, not as an isolated endeavour, but as an attempt to lift, in co-operation with others, the cultural level of India and through India the spirit of man.

"What is culture?" she had asked in an article on *Gandhiji's Contribution to World Culture and Religion*. "Culture is the expression of the humane in man. It is not the outcome of mere learning or skill. It does not spring from the head but has its



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roots in the heart. It is the wisdom which descendeth from above, from the light of the Spirit, that wisdom described by James as 'pure, peaceable, and gentle . . . full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.' "

Amongst Sophia's own "good fruits" was the editorship of two magazines which influenced the literate, and formed part of the educational effort which was slowly leavening the lump of Indian illiteracy. One of these journals, *The Aryan Path*, had already captured Western readers; it was the organ of the Indian Institute of Culture at Bangalore. As the author of several books—of which one, *Preparation for Citizenship*, contained a series of Extension Lectures given at the University of Mysore—Sophia had also founded a P.E.N. All-India Centre for Indian writers, and edited its monthly news-sheet, *The Indian P.E.N.* After I had given a talk for this Centre, I learned still more of her work for Indian literature.

To these achievements she added the further qualification of being a first-class Chairman. So efficient was she, that during the last two exhausting days at Sevagram she had been asked to take the Chair throughout the sessions. The men had proved to be too discursive, and Maude Brayshaw, an equally capable Chairman who regarded speeches which exceeded the time-limit as a form of violence, had tended towards over-severity. Sophia carried out her duties with an equable amiability which permitted no nonsense, and at the end of this feat of endurance appeared to be the only member of the Conference who was not completely worn out.

When lunch was over she took me across the garden to her guest-house, where I was to be the only guest so that I might have freedom to write and rest. In its peace and privacy, and its well-organised but unostentatious comfort, this big stone-floored room leading off a verandah above the gravel drive also reflected Sophia's personality.

Her guests were left to themselves, but never forgotten. Unless committed to some outside engagement they were expected to appear at the house for lunch and dinner, but breakfast and tea were sent to the guest-room. Each morning, soon after breakfast but never too soon, Sophia appeared to ascertain her visitor's arrangements for the day. This absence of fuss, combined with the assumption that her guest would be

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engaged in a worth-while occupation which did not need direction from others, brought a sense of peace such as I have seldom experienced in any friend's household.

Beneath the front windows of the guest-house, a narrow indoor verandah contained several small tables decorated by vases of cannas and tuberoses, which were changed every day. The windows looked across a rocky beach to the dark-blue Arabian Sea with its shallow waves, white arcs which never crashed as at Cape Comorin, but beat upon the shore in a soft, monotonous rhythm. Wherever I recall Bombay a memory comes back of my first afternoon in the guest-house before my lecture, and the unbelievable relaxation of lying, amid the scent of roses, on a convertible couch to watch the waves of the western ocean break gently against the rocks.

The programme which Sophia had drawn up for me began at the University. Since Bombay was new to me when I went to the lecture hall I could not afterwards recall its position, and the local guide, which gave detailed information about Banks, Consulates, Trade Commissioners, travel agents, restaurants, cinemas, sports and racing, characteristically did not enlighten me. But I learned that it had been founded, like the Universities of Calcutta and Madras, in the year 1857.

The six at which I had spoken, Calcutta, Benares, Lucknow, Delhi, Travancore, and Bombay, were among the eighteen open to students in different parts of India. Their future, like that of Indian education in general, remained uncertain. The Government was considering an ambitious scheme to make education free and compulsory for all children between six and fourteen ; after fourteen, they were to pass on to High School and University. Over two million teachers would be needed for this plan and their salaries would greatly exceed the amount now paid. It seemed probable that the scheme, like many others equally desirable, would have to wait until India and Pakistan had reconciled their dispute, and could pull down the forts and dismantle the bombers at present absorbing the resources of both.

I returned from the University to the forty-eight hours of respite from work which Sophia had planned. Small receptions, at which I met Bombay writers and painters, were varied by a visit

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to a private art collection and a Sunday luncheon at the apartment of Kamaladevi and her son. Many journalists and political workers came here ; among them was a tall Englishman wearing light-coloured horn-rimmed spectacles, Evelyn Wood. At a musical party in Sophia's house that evening, a Bombay singer, Lalita, accompanied her own songs on the *vina* while her sixteen-year-old daughter danced.

Lalita talked with me afterwards, explaining the instrument and the music. " Once," she said sadly, " I had a son who also helped me with my songs. He would now be seventeen, but he died of typhoid."

Before a day's shopping in which Sophia's sister-in-law acted as my guide, I walked to the top of Malabar Hill to look at the city from the Hanging Gardens. This green paradise on the hill-top exhibited its flower-beds as a beautiful woman displays her jewels ; dahlias in every shade from crimson and purple to pale yellow and coral pink seemed to rebel against the symmetry imposed on them by the gardeners. From the path encircling the flower-beds, I could see the place on the hillside where the Parsees disposed of their dead.

The Parsees, industrious, wealthy and charitable, had come to India from Persia in the seventeenth century ; their many famous commercial names included that of Sir J. N. Tata. In contrast to Muslim burials and Hindu cremations, this community left the bones of their dead to be picked clean by vultures. For that purpose the " Towers of Silence," deep enclosed wells open to the sky, were used on Malabar Hill. A small thicket concealed the wells from my view ; along the branches of the trees sat the vultures grimly waiting in rows. When the Parsees settled in Bombay, these wooded heights had lain outside the city ; to-day their peculiar Golgotha reminded the millionaires living in the palaces on the hill that rich and poor go the same way in the end.

Over the wall which bounded the circular road round the Hanging Gardens, I could see the inland sweep of Bombay from a crescent-shaped harbour spangled with islands. The Marine Drive close to the water's edge linked Malabar Hill with the imposing stone archway on the Apollo Bunder. This archway, put up for the Royal Durbar in 1911, was known, like the port itself, as " the Gateway of India."

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Through the centuries that semi-circular stretch of coast had been a gateway for many nations. Romans and Persians had landed here ; Arabs came in successive decades. From sixteenth-century Europe had sailed Vasco de Gama, creating a highway of trade for the Portuguese to whom the Sultan of Gujarat had presented the fishing town of Mumbai. Its name commemorated Mumba, the patron goddess of the Koli tribes who had been its earlier inhabitants, and was still used in the local languages to describe the city. When Charles II married Catherine of Braganza, he received Mumbai as part of her dowry, and leased it to the East India Company for £10 a year.

Driving with Miss Wadia to the shopping centre, I perceived a contrast between Bombay and sprawling, spacious Madras. Along the road to the harbour, great blocks of flats and tenements crowded the residential quarter ; the small modern apartments seemed better suited to London or New York than to a tropical city.

Miss Wadia agreed. " They are too cramped for this climate. Each tenement has only one or two rooms, and a bathroom and kitchen. But it couldn't be helped because of the overcrowding."

The population, she told me, had leaped from one million in 1945 to its present three millions. Refugees accounted for a small part of the increase, but most of it could be explained by Bombay's expanding industries. To the many cotton mills making cheap cloth for which the city was a centre, thirty rayon mills had been added since the war to provide a fabric formerly imported from Japan. In the mill area concrete *chawls*, each containing about eighty rooms, had been built for thousands of workers. Attached to some tenements I saw children's playgrounds equipped with slides and swings.

Near the Gateway Miss Wadia pointed out the Prince of Wales Museum, framed in green lawns and topped by a dome. Plans were being made here for a separate Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Museum, to contain relics of his personal life ; it would present his story " from the cradle to the grave " by exhibiting his sandals, walking-stick, spinning-wheel, spindle, and cloth spun by himself. What would the Mahatma, that unmuseum-like character, have thought of this project ? I wondered.

The car took me first to Hornby Road, Bombay's old-estab-

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lished business locality, where Mr. J. H. Collins of Macmillan had been patiently accumulating my mail and parcels from all over India. Looking at the collection of newspapers, books and pictures lying amid the more orthodox bundles of text-books on his well-ordered floor, I felt ashamed of the necessity which had compelled me to send off these presentations by post instead of carrying them with me on trains and planes. At Cook's office in Madras, where the series of long train journeys ended, I had thankfully relinquished my unwieldy bedroll, but this heap of literature more than doubled the space it had occupied. My first purchase must obviously be a container for these books and papers.

At a trunk-merchant's store I found I could buy two strong and capacious tin trunks for a few rupees. I wished that a number might be exported to England for the benefit of book-carrying travellers, who were now compelled to buy costly "book-boxes" of iron-bound wood. When the papers had been packed, there was still room for some gifts. In the curio shops behind the Taj Mahal Hotel, soon to be rebuilt for the travellers from many countries who congregated there, I purchased crimson Burmese covers, adorned with coloured glass, for my husband ; the serene carved head of a Bali girl for my son ; bed-covers, silk sarees, carved cigarette-holders, and ivory napkin-rings for various friends.

That evening the Bombay P.E.N. Centre, with Sophia as hostess, had arranged a reception for me in the Town Hall.

"Following this," ran the invitation sent out to members, "Miss Brittain will deliver a lecture at 6.15 p.m. on 'The Fate of a Writer,' and Sir Fazal Ibrahim Rahimtoola, B.A., C.I.E., M.L.C., J.P., Sheriff of Bombay, will preside."

To my surprise I found that Sir Fazal Rahimtoola was the elder brother of Mr. Habib Rahimtoola, the High Commissioner for Pakistan in London. Evidently Muslims, even in cities on the edge of Pakistan, were retained in high positions in India, though the partition had divided families much as the two World Wars had divided them between France and Germany in Alsace-Lorraine. Politics had apparently separated the Rahimtoola brothers, but they shared a quality of cordial warmth which seemed certain ultimately to reunite them.

My lecture was so crowded that late arrivals were obliged to

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stand at the back, but this, I concluded, was due less to such reputation as I possessed than to a printer's error. I had given my subject as "The Faith of a Writer"; the more idealistic but less catastrophic implications of this title would not, I felt, have attracted so large a gathering.

At her home after the lecture, Sophia told me more of her work for the P.E.N. Not only had she represented India at International P.E.N. Congresses in Barcelona and Buenos Aires; she had organised two All-India Writers' Conferences in 1945 and 1947 at Jaipur and Benares. More valuable still had been the P.E.N. books on the Indian literatures of which she was General Editor, working through these publications to unite the linguistic cultures of India. To my collection of books in the tin trunks I added the P.E.N. volumes which had already been published on Assamese, Bengali, Indo-Anglian and Telugu literature, as well as the Jaipur symposium on *The Indian Literatures of To-day* and the proceedings of the Conference entitled *Indian Writers in Council*. Twelve further volumes on Indian literature were still in preparation; they included studies of Hindi, Tamil, Sanscrit and Urdu, now the official language of Pakistan.

The next day was my last in India, apart from the few hours in which my home-going ship from Karachi would dock in Bombay. I returned seriously to work, with two talks to colleges, and an evening address on Sophia's verandah to the Bombay Branch of the All-India Women's Conference. It seemed appropriate that this comprehensive Indian visit, which had mentally begun with the Women's Conference so long ago, should end with a gathering of its members. That night I met Lady Rama Rau and Kamaladevi once more, and made the acquaintance of Urmila Mehta with whom I had often corresponded. Even now I was unable to attend the annual meeting of the Conference itself; this year it had been postponed till March, and I could not stay for it.

"Never mind," said Urmila Mehta. "We shall go on inviting you until you can come."

At dinner Barry reappeared; he had been travelling all day by train from Madras for our joint expedition to Pakistan. Would that new country prove a land of promise or a den of lions? Only the future could tell us; meanwhile I was relieved to find that I should not have to face its uncertainties alone.

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In the morning Sophia drove us to the airport. A new P.E.N. Centre, she told me on the way, had been started in Pakistan with Mr. Shahid Suhrawardy as President ; she felt sure that I should be able to make some contact with it.

"Perhaps, as it isn't political," I suggested, "it might be a means of bringing India and Pakistan together?"

French-born Sophia, like myself, could only hope. She stood waving to us from the gateway of the airport as the plane for Karachi rose into the sky.

The four-hour journey of 483 miles began quietly. From my handbag I took four envelopes, which contained letters of introduction from Agatha Harrison to key people in Pakistan. One, from which it seemed over-optimistic to expect results, was written to the Premier's wife, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan ; the others had been addressed to Mr. Ghulam Mohammad, the Finance Minister ; Begum Shaista Akhtar Suhrawardi Ikramullah, a Member of the Pakistan Legislature and Constituent Assembly ; and Mr. Z. Bokhari of the Pakistan Radio.

"They will open doors," Agatha had written of her letters. "As soon as you get there, just get a messenger to deliver them with a covering note from you. Posts are so delayed, that this will be better than sending them on ahead."

My bag also contained a fifth letter which suggested that some doors, at least, might be open already. Headed "Government of Pakistan ; Ministry of Interior ; Information and Broadcasting Division," it had been written by the Joint Secretary, Mr. S. M. Ikram.

"H.E. Mr. Rahimtoola the High Commissioner for Pakistan in United Kingdom," it began, "sent to the Hon'ble Khwaja Shahabuddin an advance copy of his letter of Introduction No. P.S. 49/49 dated the 23rd November 1949 which he had given you, and was shown to me in normal course. Having read and profited by your book 'On Becoming a Writer' I was very much interested in your proposed visit to Pakistan and after having the question examined, we informed London that we would be glad to provide all facilities to you to gather first-hand information about Pakistan and to treat you as our guest during your stay here."

Barry, who sat in the window-seat behind me, had received a

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similar invitation owing to our call on the High Commissioner in Delhi. He was now tapping out, as usual, a long letter home on his typewriter. I had grown accustomed to this occupation, which had everywhere been an accompaniment of our railway journeys; it was usually carried out on the end of my bunk, where there was most space since I was smaller than our fellow-travellers.

As he seemed to be absorbed, I looked down at a limitless vista of sea-inlets and salt-encrusted mud flats. We were flying up the coast of the Kathiawar Peninsula, a part of Gujarat; at its port of Porbandar midway between Bombay and Karachi, Mohandas K. Gandhi, the youngest of six children, was born on 2nd October, 1869. His grandfather had been premier or *diwan* of Porbandar, and his father, Karamchand Gandhi, a member of the merchant or *bania* caste, ultimately became prime minister of Rajkot State. The chief influence in Gandhi's early life was not this officially preoccupied father, but his mother Putlibai, Karamchand Gandhi's fourth wife. Putlibai herself had been attracted by Jainism, strong in Gujarat from the sixth century B.C.

It seemed a memorable coincidence that both Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, the fourteenth child of his parents, were the youngest members of large families. The fact that India's two Titans had arrived to speak for her millions after such procreative persistence was perhaps the best argument for the size of her population.

The Kathiawar States resembled the historic Duchies of Central Europe, barbaric, despotic, dominated by intrigue. Porbandar, a prosperous port having trade connections with Java, Burma, the Persian Gulf, and the African continent, was the "White City" facing the Gulf of Oman which joins the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea. The Lascars who serve in P. and O. ships are Kathiawaris; D. F. Karaka, the Indian author of the popular Gandhi biography, *Out of Dust*, describes them as "the type of Indian furthest away from all sophistication." Gandhi's small stature, large ears, and undistinguished features conformed to the Kathiawari type. If a comparison were possible with the United States, he might be said to have come from India's Middle West.

When Gandhi was born, Kathiawar had become a jigsaw



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puzzle of varying jurisdictions, which administered 449 political units and 860 different areas in 283 States. Even the map of Europe after the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War, was an exemplary pattern of simplicity compared with Kathiawar. Since the administration changed every few miles no one had been responsible for communications, which followed the pathway of least resistance. The maintenance of law and order was equally inefficient ; its confusion resembled the network of jurisdictions in medieval England which enabled most criminals to get away.

Gandhi lived just long enough to see this show-piece of feudal chaos changed into one political unit, the United States of Saurashtra. The day before the Mahatma's assassination, Sardar Patel, as the Minister of States, issued a declaration on the unification of Kathiawar which had been, he said, one of his greatest problems.

" I am glad to announce that it has now been possible to make out a scheme, and get the agreement of the States to it, by which the whole of the Kathiawar region will be integrated into a new State of Kathiawar as a single *bloc* of territory."

Soon after the plane had flown over this reformed peninsula and its neighbour, the Island of Cutch, the calm weather abruptly changed. Menacing clouds piled up in the sky, and the air became so bumpy that the plane's hostess came up to me.

" I hope these bumps aren't making you feel ill," she said.

I assured her that air-sickness was not a handicap from which I suffered.

" Is it usually like this round here ? " I inquired.

" No," she replied. " I've never known it the same before."

I looked back at Barry, now absorbed in a book. He had travelled by air only once before ; the jack-in-a-box gymnastics of the plane appeared to cause him no perturbation. My wrist watch showed that the time was one o'clock ; we had still half an hour of flying before we were due at Karachi.

Suddenly, as the air became darker, the pilot seemed to accelerate. In a few minutes the plane began to lose height, though the barren coast below appeared to be unchanged.

" Are we coming down here ? " I inquired of the air hostess, picturing a crash-landing due to some unknown threat ahead.

" Why, yes," she said. " It's the airport."

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I remembered that on my previous visit, which seemed half a lifetime ago, hardly a building had broken the monotonous brown of the Sind desert surrounding this aerodrome. As we descended at 1.15, skilfully piloted through a high wind in advance of the storm, the cement hostelry which had appeared so unfriendly when I first saw Karachi now looked like hospitality itself. Two officials from the Ministry of Information awaited us there, both named Hussein though they were unrelated. The elder told us that he had been an Air Force Major in the Burma campaign ; the younger was still junior enough to be sitting for examinations.

With the official formalities completed in record time, they escorted us to the Government car. At that moment the dust-storm broke, blotting out visibility so completely that the process of landing would have been difficult for an incoming plane. We had further reason to thank the efficient Air India pilot when heavy rain thundered through the opaque air. The smooth surface of the road became so wet that the unchained car wheels began to slide. We were obliged to move so slowly through ten miles of desert that nearly an hour of difficult driving went by before we reached the city.

## XVII—PROBLEMS IN PAKISTAN

“ We are the conscience hidden in God’s heart,  
We are the heirs of Moses and Aaron.  
Sun and moon are still bright with our radiance,  
Lightning-flashes still lurk in our cloud.  
In our essence Divinity is mirrored :  
The Muslim’s being is one of the signs of God.”

Sir Mohammad Iqbal.

*The Secrets of the Self.* XVII.

“ WE DON’T EXPECT this kind of thing outside the monsoon period,” said Major S. M. Hussein apologetically.  
“ It’s most unusual.”

During the long drive he explained that it had been impossible to fulfil the request, made by Barry on our behalf, that we should be put up, as in India, by private householders. In Karachi, he told us, there was no householder with a spare room. The population, which had been 380,000 in 1945, had been increased by Government officials and refugees to 1½ millions.

“ Housing is one of our chief problems,” he continued.  
“ Most houses are divided between several families, each living in one or two rooms. As a Government we had to find accommodation where there had only been a small provincial legislature.”

“ Weren’t you able to requisition any buildings ? ” I inquired.

“ We could have, but it would have made us unpopular, so we tried to avoid it. Until temporary places were put up the Government was virtually sitting in the street, without even tables or notebooks or pencils.”

That was why, he added, they had been obliged to accommodate us in an hotel, but the Palace was the best that Karachi could offer. He hoped we should find it comfortable.

The Palace proved to be a large stone building, with a dome at the corner and an extensive annexe. A gravel drive divided it from a small garden, in which a border of pink, magenta, and white hollyhocks enclosed an unexpectedly green lawn. The hotel was doing its best to be worthy of a capital city ; it compared creditably with the leading hotels in such British ports

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as Plymouth and Southampton. Barry and I were conducted to rooms in the annexe, discreetly separated as widely as possible. Mine, leading off the first-floor verandah, looked across a polo-ground and the Governor-General's garden to the sulphur-coloured domes and towers of central Karachi, "the glory of the East." A large comfortable room furnished as a bed-sitting-room, it had a spacious bathroom which usually provided hot water, and boasted of a toilet-seat so newly varnished that anyone remaining there to meditate would inevitably stick to it.

On the verandah I compared notes with Barry regarding our friendly reception. So far, Pakistan did not appear to be the embarrassing purgatory that the tensions of the Gandhi Conference had led us to expect. Or were we, perhaps, being subtly deceived? Was it possible that the two courteous and agreeable young men in charge of us were closely observing us all the time?

Whether they were or not, they appeared hospitably ready to devote their time to us. After a very late lunch we climbed back into the Government car, and set off on a tour of the docks and the overcrowded city. The docks ran east and west of a triangular bay, separated from the Arabian Sea by a low sandy reef stretching southward from the mainland to the rocky cape of Manora. In the harbour, protected by this breakwater, lay the ships of various nations; on some I noticed the Pakistan flag, with its white crescent and star against a dark green background.

The macadamised streets of the city, clean and wide, appeared a good beginning for a fine State capital. In two hundred years Karachi had grown from a fishing village, Karachi Kun, into the metropolis of Sind, the dry alluvial plain which extends from the Baluchistan Plateau to the Thal Desert, and but for the Indus would be a desert itself. Though the shopping centre was crowded with booths set up by refugees, it still appeared spacious and tidy. Camels with haughty heads and supercilious expressions drew the heavier loads; between them dodged little donkey-carts steered by white-robed, bearded drivers. Neither beggars nor stray animals impaired the orderly street. A number of refugees earned their living by cycle-rickshaws, which had reduced the fees of the old-fashioned victorias still soliciting

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for custom. The whole city seemed to be dominated by a driving determination, quite startling after the resigned, philosophical acceptance of their discomforts by the urban populations of India.

This combination of pride and energy foreshadowed an independent future for Pakistan's eighty millions. Dorothy Jane Ward has stated her belief that, under British rule, Hindu-Muslim feuds had been repressed rather than eliminated. In spite of Gandhi they re-emerged when the British departed, if only because few Muslims were convinced that they would ever have any real authority in a Hindu State. Whether or not this judgment by a long-established American resident was well-founded, the Pakistanis had accepted what Barry described as "a State of bits and pieces" rather than forego their separate existence.

One of the larger "bits," East Pakistan, covering the combined lower valleys of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, was cut off from West Pakistan by over a thousand miles of Indian territory. The Western area itself amalgamated Sind, Baluchistan, Bahawalpur, the North-West Frontier Province, and the divided Punjab, "land of the five rivers." Further north lay the question mark, Kashmir. This Western section had become keenly conscious of its past history, referring in its official publications to the five thousand years of the Indus Valley civilisation and its own position as the easternmost limit of Alexander's Macedonian legions.

From Dr. I. H. Qureshi, Deputy Minister of the Interior in charge of refugees, I was to learn that the seven million Muslims who fled from India had raised fewer problems than India's six million refugee Hindus. As an agricultural country with four-fifths of her population dependent on the land, Pakistan had been better able to absorb her exiles. Extra workers were needed to cultivate the "silver fibre" cash-crop-cotton grown exclusively in Western Pakistan, and the "golden fibre" jute of which Eastern Pakistan held the monopoly. If these leading crops could not employ additional labour, the country also produced wheat, rice, barley, maize, millet and tobacco. On account of its products and the export market that they furnished, Pakistan had a favourable balance of trade for the year 1949-50, and a budget surplus of 600,000 rupees. Over the same period, her officials pointed out, India's deficit in rupees amounted to 140 millions.

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This favourable trade balance had enabled Pakistan to maintain the value of her rupee when India devalued hers after Britain's devaluation of the pound. For English visitors, it had made Pakistan as financially inaccessible as the United States. Like Barry, I discovered our economic handicaps when we invited our two escorts to take tea with us at the hotel.

Since the sum involved was not ruinous, they accepted politely. The Pakistan rupee then stood at nine to the pound; tea for four persons amounted to approximately twenty-five shillings. Ruefully we realised that, but for the Government's hospitality, we could not have afforded to visit Karachi at all.

Over tea we discussed British Press reactions to the progress of Pakistan; the two officials seemed familiar with the few publications on the subject which had so far appeared.

"One English editor came here for about twenty-four hours," said Major Hussein indignantly. "Then he went home and wrote a most unfair article on Muslims, giving only the Indian side of the Kashmir dispute."

I remembered the article vaguely, but it had failed to impress me at the time; since I had totally forgotten its contents, I was able to be discreetly sympathetic. But editors, I reflected, seldom asked for trouble without knowing why. This one had evidently decided to throw his weight on the Indian side instead of treading the tight-rope on which Barry and I were now precariously balanced. A tight-rope, we agreed, was an uncomfortable place; with the best intentions in the world, you could topple off it at any moment.

That evening I found myself already in contact with the Pakistan P.E.N. On the typed programme which Major Hussein had efficiently drawn up for me, the first item read: "Wednesday. January 18. 6.00 p.m. Tea with Professor Ahmed Ali."

The young-looking Professor who had invited me so promptly was a Vice-President of the Pakistan P.E.N. and a well-known writer in both Urdu and English. Before the war he had written a novel, *Twilight in Delhi*, which had been published in London by the Hogarth Press. Over tea we talked of his later work as poet and translator, especially of Indonesian and Urdu poetry. I had known nothing of either until he introduced me that afternoon to the work of Chairil Anwar, prematurely dead at

twenty-eight, and other poets of the Indonesian Renaissance included in his volume of translations, *The Flaming Earth*. He gave me a copy of this book, and later sent me its successor, *The Falcon and the Hunted Bird*. In this second anthology he had collected and translated eleven Urdu poets, from Mohammad Vali, born in 1668, to Nawab Mirza Khan Dagh, who died in 1905.

"If French be the sweetest language of Europe," his Introduction began, "Persian is the sweetest language of Asia. And Urdu is as sweet as Persian, for a good deal of its vocabulary is derived from that tongue . . . The new mixture of Indian, Persian and other Islamic languages was called Urdu, a Turki word meaning 'camp,' and became the common language of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent."

At seven o'clock another guest arrived, the President of the Pakistan P.E.N., Shahid Suhrawardy, short, stout, middle-aged, and highly intelligent. Though he was now a member of the Pakistan Public Service Commission he had spent many years in Europe as a journalist, and brought to the new P.E.N. Centre the knowledge of a tough world-citizen who was able to see national tensions in perspective.

"The fundamental idea behind the International P.E.N.," he had said at the inaugural meeting of the Pakistan Centre the previous October, "is to focus our attention on these purely literary problems, to unshackle the spirit from irrelevant political and social obsessions, and to let literature breathe again and walk in freedom and dignity. By liberating the creative artist they hope to lay down the path of peace, eliminating conflicts not only in the literary world but in the much wider area of the clash of irreconcilable ideologies."

For over two hours we read and discussed the poetry of Asia ; I was startled on leaving to find that the time was already 8.30.

On the verandah outside my room after dinner, I looked at the lights of Karachi beneath a sky now clear and brilliant with stars. The air was cool after the dust-storm ; I longed for the warm coat which I had left with my heavy luggage at Thomas Cook's office to be put on the boat at Bombay.

Was it too soon to decide that my apprehensions had been foolish ? In two and a half hours of discussion, not one mention

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had been made of the Indo-Pakistan dispute, nor even of India except in terms of her contribution to poetry. Instead, I had found myself as instantly at home with the two Pakistani writers as if they had been members of an Oxford Common Room. Could this be regarded as a good augury for the experiment which Barry and I were making ?

Politics returned in earnest the following morning at an interview arranged for us with Dr. Qureshi, a Ph.D. of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, who had been Professor of History at the University of Delhi. A pale spectacled man in a Jinnah cap of black astrakhan, his face seemed still to reflect the crisis which had faced responsible individuals at the very moment of Indian rebirth. For over an hour he described the misery of the Muslim refugees, the mass rumours which led to self-imposed exile more often than actual riots, and the difficulties of rehabilitation in a new country.

"Our policy of land-development has had to be accelerated," he said of the Thal Valley in the West Punjab. "There is land to give and it has been given, but it is not of a kind which will make the holding economic if a family's standard of living is to be improved."

From the refugees he turned to the subject of the women abducted by both sides in the struggle. "If you want to exterminate a people," he remarked, "kill their men and take their women to populate another nation." We discussed also the canal dispute, which arose from Pakistan's fear that her canal waters rising in India might be stopped at their source as a reprisal.

"Much more could be done by the Commonwealth itself to find a solution for these problems," he concluded. "It *must* bother about them. A public opinion needs to be built up in England and elsewhere, so that help may be given us in resolving the psychological tensions on this continent."

When the talk began, Dr. Qureshi had quietly stated that he was himself "a refugee." He said nothing of the attack made by his students on his home and library during the partition troubles in Delhi, nor mentioned the destruction of two manuscripts on which he had been at work. In spite of this disillusioning experience, he had been one of the few Pakistanis to send a message to the Santiniketan Conference. Only after he had given us nearly two hours of his time, did we realise that we had caused him to



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miss an Assembly debate on Kashmir at which Premier Liaquat Ali Khan was speaking. As he walked away with his portfolio under his arm for the tail-end of the discussion, Dr. Qureshi did not appear to regret the long interview. No doubt he had heard similar speeches on Kashmir before, and judged it better worth his while to put together some elusive facts for visitors from abroad.

A less tragic talk followed with my correspondent Mr. Ikram, on the national Press and the Pakistan Tagore, Sir Mohammad Iqbal. Iqbal, it appeared, had set the ideal of a Pakistan State before Muslim India as early as 1930, when Mohammed Ali Jinnah himself had not begun to work for it. I was to hear Iqbal's name mentioned frequently before I left Karachi. Abandoning the topic of literature, Mr. Ikram assured us that if only the Kashmir dispute could be resolved, other questions at issue between India and Pakistan would settle themselves.

We left the temporary Government Building with its congested offices for the Y.M.C.A. in Havelock Road. At Agatha Harrison's suggestion, we called on the American wardens, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Coan ; they would be willing, she had said, to give us any advice or help that we needed. We found them ready to offer us not only advice, but lunch. With relief we descended from our tight-rope, and put a few questions which ran no risk of creating an international incident.

" We were both delegates at the Conferences in Santiniketan and Sevagram," I explained. " West Pakistan sent no delegates although they were invited, and when we came here we expected to be treated rather coldly. But the Ministry of Information which is looking after us couldn't be kinder or more hospitable. Do you think they're really suspicious of us all the time ? "

" I doubt it," Mr. Coan replied. " After all, you weren't wholly unknown when you came. The Muslims are not complicated like the Hindus ; they're comparatively simple people who don't find deception easy."

" That's how they struck us," said Barry. " But we're too new here to trust our judgment."

" I think you can take the Government's courtesy at its face value," Mr. Coan insisted.

" But why should they extend it so liberally ? "

" Well, there really is extreme ignorance of India and Pakistan

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in both Europe and America, isn't there ? They hope you'll make their country better known."

"We mean to as far as we can," I said. "But there were dozens of people at the Conference who could have done this. Why didn't they send anyone to it ?"

Mr. Coan became cautious.

"I have no direct knowledge of the reason," he answered. "But I can put you in touch with someone who may be able to help you."

The usual afternoon scramble followed this visit to the Y.M.C.A.; our engagements in Pakistan were at least as formidable as they had been in India. A tea-party arranged for us at the Shezan Restaurant by Mr. Mallik, the Minister of Health and Works, preceded lectures by us both at the Theosophical Hall. A formal dinner and reception at the home of Begum Ikramullah completed the evening.

At the tea-party I observed the graceful *ghararas* and *shalwars*, with a *dopatta* of silk or muslin thrown over the head and shoulders, which were worn by Muslim women of high rank. Although the *purdah* system had virtually ended, such women were not yet conspicuous in the streets of Karachi. I talked to Begum Mallik, who wore a rich costume of shining blue satin, until I was summoned to sit beside an elderly woman dressed in white.

"So you have come from the Conference at Sevagram ?" she said. "I also was invited to attend it."

"We were very sorry you couldn't be there," I responded tentatively.

"I was sorry too. Unfortunately the invitation did not arrive in time for me to make the necessary arrangements."

In the Theosophical Hall, a large miscellaneous audience awaited us; many men in the front rows appeared to come from a humbler economic background than that of most audiences in India. Under the Chairmanship of Dr. Bakar, a Muslim scholar who acted as official deputy to Dr. Qureshi, I spoke on "The Faith of a Writer," this time correctly described. But the questions which followed had little relation to this safe literary topic and were frankly political.

"Did England let India go for idealistic reasons, or because she couldn't help it ?" came the parting shot.

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I replied with a reference to the consistency of Socialist policy on India, and gave some examples of the left-wing writers and journalists who had worked within the Labour Party for liberation. Leaving Barry discoursing eloquently on world peace, I hurried back to the Palace Hotel to change for Begum Ikramullah's reception.

Having changed in haste, I waited at leisure for Barry and the official car to reappear. Half an hour went by : had the car met with an accident ? I wondered. Barry arrived at last, to explain that an amicable disagreement on the significance of peace had developed between him and the Chairman, who had made a further fifteen minutes' speech to explain his side of the argument.

At their house in the Clifton area of Karachi, our hostess and her husband, Mr. Mohammed Ikramullah, Permanent Secretary to the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations, were entertaining the delegates to the Colombo Conference which had just concluded. Among the guests was the Secretary to the British Minister for Commonwealth Relations ; the Minister himself, Philip Noel-Baker, did not appear.

A month later this international specialist was destined to be transformed into an expert on electric grids and coal seams, and to become the Minister of Fuel and Power. According to comments which I had heard in both India and Pakistan, he had been an excellent Minister of Commonwealth Relations ; his whole life had fitted him for the post. Judging from the Press reports of his visit to Karachi, he saw all the appropriate people and performed a number of tactful duties, even to laying a wreath on the grave of the Quaid-i-Azam, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. His translation into a Fuel Minister was an eloquent comment on the vicissitudes of ministerial office, in which promotion or its reverse appear to be determined not by merit, but by the strange necessities of political manœuvre.

As soon as we arrived, Begum Ikramullah left her official guests and came up to me ; for some years she had been, to my surprise, a reader of my books. I saw a gay, attractive, green-robed young woman in her eloquent thirties ; a Pakistani Lady Tweedsmuir, but more liable, I gathered, to calculated indiscretions. Her son was in England at Rugby School ; her

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three daughters, too young as yet to go abroad, remained in Karachi.

Cheerfully she plunged into a cordial greeting.

"I'm so glad you could come ! I've wanted to meet you for years ! Did you enjoy the Conference in India ?"

"It was very interesting," I said. "We were sorry there was nobody from West Pakistan."

"Yes, it was a pity. I was invited myself, but the invitation came too late."

I changed the conversation to the subject of Pakistan's Legislature, or Parliament. It had only about eighty members, she told me, including two or three women of whom she was one. Yes, she had spoken that morning in the debate on Kashmir. Barry, I observed, was discussing the same topic at the buffet dinner-table with a member of the Canadian delegation. He subsequently reported to me the Canadian's comment : "I'd never realised till I came here how acute the situation was. In Canada we have absolutely no idea of the extent and urgency of Indo-Pakistan tension."

That tension was present, unmitigated and ominous, in the next morning's newspapers. *Dawn*, the organ of the Muslim League, had divided its attention between Philip Noel-Baker's visit and the speech of Premier Liaquat Ali Khan. On my sofa, away from embarrassing observation, Barry and I looked with growing depression at the conspicuous headlines, which emphasised every provocative comment and displayed like a banner each accusation of India.

"Oh, damn !" I cried, and for once Barry, who was a Methodist preacher in New Zealand, did not rebuke me.

The Press is normally the enemy of provincialism and in peacetime even of nationalism ; it is also the friend of regional pride, which is a desirable quality totally different from provincial narrowness. It keeps a series of windows perpetually open to the wider world ; its best reporters interpret the peoples of one region to the inhabitants of another, and thus remove the ignorance and prejudice which erects false barriers between men and women. But sometimes, driven by the winds of excessive passion, the Press is tempted to exploit half-truths, and to represent them as incorrigible facts or outrageous falsehoods. In reporting the Indo-Pakistan dispute, the Press of both

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countries, with the unmovable exception of *The Statesman*, departed from normal standards of journalistic integrity. Its part in the creation of bitterness was recognised by both Prime Ministers when they met in the spring of 1950.

Later that morning I addressed the Central Government College for Girls, the first school of its kind in Karachi ; it had recently opened and still had only 160 students. I described the British women's movement, with its early handicaps, and was followed by the young Principal, who wore a becoming purple dress. She was a married woman, she told me, and the mother of a two-year-old child.

" India and Pakistan have been able to follow the work of these pioneers," she said. " The Koran recognises equality between men and women ; we have only to follow it."

Over tea in the staff-room I was surprised to find that Lois Mitchison, the elder daughter of the novelist Naomi, was attached to the staff as a teacher of history. On my home-going ship coincidence was to bring me into contact with Dr. Margaret Emslie, her companion on an experimental car journey from England to India which had ended at Teheran. Lois and I exchanged a few words ; into my mind came the first tender line of a poem which her mother had written in her babyhood :

" Little Lois, in a world all alone . . . "

Though now a correct description, it did not seem quite to fit the formidable young woman who inspected me so critically, but one never knew what lay behind horn-rimmed spectacles and an Eton crop. Lois, I gathered, was making a courageous attempt to live in exactly the same discomfort as her students, which might well be one way of cementing friendship between East and West.

I met the Principal again with her husband over luncheon at the Beach Luxury Hotel, where the management was gallantly endeavouring to establish a dashing modern rendezvous on the flat sandy shore. Behind the hotel spread a small garden with a green lawn and some struggling flowers, where an open pool offered safe and clean if sandy bathing.

Our host was Mr. Z. Bokhari of the Pakistan Radio, a tall man with grey wiry hair who had received one of Agatha's

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introductions. I learned that he was a friend of Lionel Fielden, the English writer and broadcaster, who had been coming to lunch also but was laid up with an attack of malaria.

"He wants you to come and see him," said Mr. Bokhari. Optimistically I promised that I would, but my congested programme ruled out the visit. Judging from these contacts that Mr. Bokhari would be liberal and tolerant, I put to him one of the awkward questions passed on to me by India. There I had found many followers of Gandhi, and some members of the Government, much concerned over the fate of Abdul Khan Ghaffir Khan, a Muslim leader known as "the frontier Gandhi" who had worked with the Mahatma during his campaign in the North-West Frontier Province. Pakistan, I was told, had interned this peace-maker; all foreigners who cared for peace should have the courage to protest to the Pakistan Government.

"Mr. Bokhari," I began, "can you tell me why the Pakistan Government has interned Abdul Khan Ghaffir Khan?"

"I understand," he answered obliquely, "that the conditions of his internment are quite comfortable."

"Yes, but why isn't he released?"

Mr. Bokhari decided to be frank with me.

"You cannot expect Pakistan to release a man who is working for an independent Pathanistan. With Kashmir still unsettled, Pakistan can't afford to lose another frontier province. It might be the beginning of complete disintegration."

I had not sufficient knowledge to comment on this disclosure, but my thoughts circulated round the illimitable character of human complexity. In the hope of throwing further light on it, I persisted with my questions.

"If that's the reason, why doesn't Pakistan put him on trial and let the truth come out? It's his imprisonment without trial that worries people who care for human rights."

"Such a trial could easily become a source of disaffection," said Mr. Bokhari. He added politely: "Didn't you in England have a Regulation 18B which was used during the war to keep people interned without trial? Pakistan is just as much in a state of emergency as England was during the war."

It was too true. How much easier politics would be, I reflected, if only black were always black, and white completely white!

## *Problems in Pakistan*

I decided to avoid political topics at our next engagement, a tea-party at the Al-Hamra Restaurant given for us by Dr. Bakar, our energetic Chairman at the previous evening's lectures. But within five minutes Barry and Dr. Bakar had renewed their argument, which appeared to turn on the differences between Mohammedanism and Christianity. This, I realised, was capable of becoming an even more explosive topic than Indo-Pakistan tension. Dr. Bakar's guests, a male contingent of grave middle-aged scholars in Jinnah caps of grey or black astrakhan, joined earnestly in the discussion.

"Christianity," one of them observed in measured tones, "is a negative non-active religion without a social philosophy."

This sweeping generalisation produced from Barry a series of semi-articulate explosions. I did not remind our fellow-guest of Professor A. N. Whitehead's statement that Islam believes in a world regulated by the will of Allah who imposes order, and I had not then read the prophetic comment of my lively acquaintance Acharya Kripalani on the Mohammedan religion.

"All situations are supposed to have been provided for . . . For instance, the principles regulating conduct towards friends and enemies differ. But in life it is difficult to decide who is a friend and who is an enemy. The friend of to-day may be the enemy of to-morrow."

I felt relieved when a fellow-guest tactfully steered the conversation on to the perennial topic of Iqbal. For a few moments Barry rumbled on like an expiring thunderstorm, but eventually he subsided, and we discussed the poet's contribution to Muslim thought. I was to leave Pakistan with several volumes of Iqbal's writings, one of which Dr. Bakar presented to me at a subsequent dinner. When I read them on the homeward ship, they taught me that Mohammedanism lays all its emphasis on individuality, realism, and positive executive action, in contrast to the self-abnegation, idealism and contemplative negativity of the Buddhist and Hindu.

After I had drafted a broadcast required for the next day, Barry and I went on to a small supper-party which the Coans had arranged for us in the hope that it might illuminate our unsolved problems. In contrast to the semi-official gatherings at elegant city restaurants, it was given at her converted hut in the Intelligence School by a young Irish Quaker married to a Muslim

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government servant whom she had met at Dublin University. The hut was not difficult to find even in that barracks of hutments ; the Irish wife had made an English garden, surrounded by a hedge, come to life in the sandy soil. After meeting them both, I could understand the mutual attraction which had caused the fair girl and her dark young husband to join together in this nation-building experiment. Their baby daughter, a lovely two-year-old child with golden tips to her black eyelashes, slept in a cot next to the living-room undisturbed by the crescendo of conversation.

When supper had been cleared away, another visitor arrived with his European wife ; Shahid Suhrawardy, urbane and realistic, had been suitably invited to assist in our enlightenment. His coming seemed to suggest that the previous pleasant but conventional talk had achieved its introductory purpose. I hastened to fill a short pause before the opportunity disappeared.

" Mr. Barrington and I have a question we very much want answered," I began. Encouraged by a sympathetic glance from the P.E.N. President, I went on.

" We've been trying to discover why no delegates went from here to our Conference in India. Professor Hussein of East Pakistan came from Dacca, but there was no one from West Pakistan. I've been told more than once that the invitations arrived too late, but they went out at the same time as they were sent to much more distant countries which were represented. That wasn't the real reason, was it ? "

A moment of silence greeted these awkward questions ; then everybody began to talk at once. From the babel of explanations, Barry and I gathered some fragments of truth which the *Dawn* article, traced for me by Major Hussein, was later to confirm. It appeared that the presence at the Conference of Indian politicians who endorsed Gandhi with their lips but, in Pakistan's opinion, repudiated him in their lives, had given an impression that the whole gathering was a hypocritical sham. It might even have been brought together for the purpose of concocting some nefarious design against Pakistan, and any Pakistani who accepted an invitation would have become a suspect person. No doubt most of the foreign delegates were quite sincere, but they were too innocent and inexperienced to realise that the Indian politicians were not genuine followers of Gandhi . . .



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At this point, I became quite violent myself.

"Innocent! Gullible! Why, some of us have known Mr. Nehru on and off for years! We're quite aware he isn't a pacifist. He has never pretended to be one!"

A look of surprise seemed to be dawning on several faces, and I hurried on.

"Not a word was said against Pakistan. We were all looking desperately for a way of reconciliation—especially some of the Indians, like Sudhir Ghosh. And the Conference was largely organised by English Quakers."

"I'm afraid we don't even trust them," interpolated a subdued voice.

"Not even the Quakers! Not any of them? Look here," I said, turning to our host, "if Agatha Harrison had come to Karachi between the Conferences and assured your Government that they were honest meetings, would it have made any difference?"

"Agatha Harrison?" he said gravely. "Yes, that would have made all the difference."

Gandhi, it seemed, had been right as usual, only it would not have been necessary for all of us, equipped with our tents and bedrolls, to come to the scene of the conflict. Agatha Harrison would have been enough; we ought to have pooled our spare cash and sent her to Karachi . . .

Into another embarrassing silence, Barry dropped one of his well-planted bricks. As usual, it had excellent results.

"You know," he said, "I've met a number of fine people since I came to Pakistan. I admire them all, and the splendid way you're building up your State. But I haven't met a single person who was prepared to concede anything to the Indian point of view."

There was a general gasp.

Nothing could be done but follow the brick with a comparison which might prove to be another.

"In Calcutta," I said, "I stayed with some people who lost their home during the riots in Lahore. They had a beautiful estate and they didn't want to go, but it was attacked and their lives were in danger. They had to fly to India, leaving everything behind. But they won't say a word against the people who attacked them, or against Pakistan. They refuse to do or say anything to make bitterness worse."

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A new series of disclaimers broke out. The Pakistanis, I was assured, could forgive too ; they didn't want bitterness to continue either. I thought of Dr. Qureshi and his message to our Conference as Shahid Suhrawardy said gently : " After all, you've only just come here. When you've been in Karachi a little longer, you'll find many people as generous as your Calcutta friends."

The barriers were down ; the Indo-Pakistan dispute had ascended to a human level.

" I'm sure I shall," I said.

## XVIII—WHERE IS THE PLACE . . . ?

- “ Whence then cometh wisdom ? and where is the place of understanding ?  
“ Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.  
“ Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.  
“ God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.  
“ For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven.”

Joh 28, verses 20-25.

THAT NIGHT I FOUND a telephone message waiting for me at the hotel from Michael Scott. He was staying, he said, with Archdeacon Spence of Holy Trinity Church in Lawrence Road, and wanted to get in touch with me as soon as possible.

On the final evening of the Sevagram Conference, after Nehru's speech, Michael had addressed a group of delegates on the wrongs committed against Africans in South Africa. After the late session of the previous night his hearers had been tired, and the flickering light of the hurricane lamps was not conducive to wakefulness. But somehow the quiet statement, delivered simply and without eloquence, had made its way.

Early in the morning I telephoned him, suggesting that he might come to the hotel before an interview arranged for us at 10.30 with Begum Liaquat Ali Khan. Directly after breakfast he arrived with his New Zealand-born host, whom Barry greeted nostalgically. We took four chairs into the garden, which guaranteed a measure of privacy. Sitting among the pink and white hollyhocks we told him what we had learned of Pakistan's problems in three overwhelming days, recounting the bitterness against India, the fantastic suspicions of our Conference, and the human desire for understanding concealed beneath the harsh exterior of political fear. These suspicions, we thought, were largely due to the political and psychological separation of the two countries since 1947. We should know more after we had seen Begum Liaquat Ali Khan in half an hour's time.

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"I am only here for two or three days," Michael told us. "I wanted to thank the Pakistan Government for supporting me at the Security Council. Do you think I could come along with you now?" he added, as though interviews with the wives of Prime Ministers fell automatically into one's lap. I concluded later that for him, through the good offices of somebody or other, they probably did.

At that moment Major Hussein and his colleague appeared to conduct us to the Prime Minister's house, and I asked if Michael could accompany us. Major Hussein looked dubious; it was not customary for Begum Liaquat Ali Khan to see visitors at a moment's notice. But perhaps if I sent a note to the Prime Minister's Secretary, introducing Michael and explaining his mission, an exception might be made. I tore a sheet from my notebook and wrote the informal letter, which young Mr. Hussein took away in the car. Ten minutes later he returned to say that Michael might join the party.

The Prime Minister, we learned on the way, had been India's Finance Minister before partition. His wife was no mere auxiliary; she had played an important part in the creation of Pakistan, and especially in organising its women. I had heard this the previous day from Mr. Coan; great credit was due to her for her work, he had said, since a social conscience had not developed as fast among the sheltered Muslim women as among the educated minority of Hindus. In finding builders for the structure of social work that she was erecting, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan had started almost from scratch.

From her and from others I was soon to gather what that single-handed effort had meant. In August, 1947, riots and massacres in the East Punjab had preceded the Delhi troubles known to Pakistan as "the September blood-bath." When Muslim refugees—as ragged, starved, diseased, poverty-stricken and terrified as the Hindu refugees who fled to India—poured by thousands across the border into Lahore, the new Prime Minister of Pakistan made his headquarters there. Cholera broke out, and vaccine was locally unobtainable; the dead and dying overflowed from the packed hospitals into the streets. Relief was handicapped by disorganised transport and insufficient housing, and by the failure of improvised machinery to convey and distribute the supplies required.

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It was also hampered by the women of Pakistan themselves. Protected and untrained, they had not been prepared to meet such an emergency. Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan characteristically determined that they must learn to meet it, whether they wanted to be effective or not.

"We cannot afford," she declared briskly, "to have half our population a drag on society, and therefore a source of weakness to the overall safety of Pakistan."

In less than two years, a large number of Pakistan's women had ceased to be that social drag. Begum Liaquat Ali Khan formed a Pakistan Women's Voluntary Service to feed and care for the refugees. Faced with real emergencies, the women responded to her summons. Wives left their homes, students their classes. In hospitals, transit camps, and at the roadside, they arrived in hundreds to help the millions of sick and homeless exiles. Following the initiative of the Prime Minister's wife, they founded an Employment Exchange, a Lost and Found Bureau, and a Home for Widows.

Most revolutionary of all was the Abducted Women's Bureau, established to reclaim some of the 60,000 Muslim women carried off by Sikhs in the East Punjab. This calamity taught the women of Pakistan that they could not count on protection by others in a time of crisis. They must throw off their lethargy, cast away their outworn customs, and find out how to protect themselves.

Trucks went out nightly through the streets of Lahore, taking food and clothing to refugees too weak or ill to reach the main distributing centres. With them travelled Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, ministering unafraid to miserable fellow-creatures dying of cholera. Like her people she was learning the lessons of independence in the hard way. This experience of caring for the sick in conditions as grim as any faced by the better-prepared women of India, brought her up against Pakistan's even more serious dearth of trained nurses.

She sent out an appeal for educated Muslim girls to come forward for training. They came slowly, for the demand meant a clash with deep-rooted prejudices and customs cherished by their families. Before they could be attracted in sufficient numbers, a reorganisation of Pakistan's primitive nursing service was inevitable. The Prime Minister's wife visited hospitals, interviewed doctors, organised committees, arranged for English

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nurses to come to Pakistan and train the recruits, and for English hospitals to receive Pakistan students. The nursing service was built up by emergency methods unknown since the days of Florence Nightingale.

When the immediate crisis was over, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan did not rest. She founded a Pakistan Women's National Guard, recruiting over two thousand girls into three battalions, and established an Association for Cottage Industries. Finally she organised an All-Pakistan Women's Association which was as comprehensive, in a smaller population, as the All-India Women's Conference. From first-hand experience its members learnt what life meant for the poor who had to live in the Lyari Quarter, Karachi's worst slum. In March, 1949, they helped to organise "Meena Bazaars" and Flag Days for Kashmir Relief and the Pakistan Red Cross. One such Bazaar, held in the Parsee Gymkhana grounds, had brought the Red Cross over 300,000 rupees.

When I arrived with Michael and Barry at the Prime Minister's house, I expected to find the woman responsible for these achievements both dominating and dynamic. In this I was not mistaken, but I was hardly prepared for the tiny elegant figure, only five feet tall, decoratively bejewelled, and dressed, obviously with great care, in a silver-edged robe of magenta silk. The boudoir in which she received us was furnished as tastefully as a Mayfair mansion. On a shelf stood a picture of her young sons, Ashraf and Akbar, aged twelve and eight.

This sagacious femininity was accompanied by a brilliance which scintillated like a metal mirror. The Premier's wife, I discovered, was a native of the United Provinces, and a pupil of the Isabella Thoburn College which I had addressed in Lucknow. At Lucknow University she had taken a Degree in Economics and Sociology, and before her marriage to Liaquat Ali Khan, then Honorary Secretary of the All-India Muslim League, had been Professor of Economics in the Indraprastha Girls' College in Delhi.

Without wasting time on formalities, she plunged into an account of the Indo-Pakistan conflict from the Muslim standpoint. Her summary was vivid and concise, emphasising important facts, omitting irrelevant details. As she traced the course of the dispute since August, 1947, a picture developed of

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Pakistan's growth from the predicament of officials set down with notebooks and pencils to create a metropolitan capital out of a provincial port, to a prosperous State with a favourable balance of trade. Some of her moral judgments were severe ; knowing one or two of the individuals criticised, we reserved our own. The capacity for forgiveness has never been a cheap human quality, but it is inevitably less costly for the meek and obscure than for gifted persons in high places.

We who had not seen the Delhi massacres, or tended the refugees dying of cholera in the streets of Calcutta and Lahore, knew that we had no right to condemn the bitterness of those who had endured such experiences. As Indian Minister of Health, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur had organised help for the exiles in India ; without an official position of her own, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan had done the same for their counterparts in Pakistan. Both women were educated and civilised—as well educated and highly civilised as any woman in the world ; each had risen, with gallantry and intelligence, to the demands of her time.

We could not help but think it a tragedy that such women, leaders in new States where their kind was still too rare, should cherish emotional resentments, and work apart instead of together for the same humanity. But we belonged to Western peoples which had allowed national feuds to wreck their countries, and built frontiers against each other in territories much smaller than India and Pakistan ; we were not entitled to suggest cooperation rather than hostility. All we could do was to work for it quietly, by methods in which we believed.

“ What can be done now ? ” I asked, when the story of disasters and grievances was ended.

As usual, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan went straight to the point.

“ Kashmir is the real obstacle. If that were settled, the other difficulties could be overcome. Provided that a really fair plebiscite could be held and the people allowed to express their will, Pakistan would rather see Kashmir go to India than drift along with the problem unsettled. It is disastrous that Pakistan and India should have no plan for common defence against an outside invader.”

“ Can we help in any way when we get back to our countries ? ” Barry inquired.

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" Yes ; you can. The best way of helping is to give the facts ; the Pakistan case always goes by default. Other peoples ought to know the implications of our problems, and the international peace movement should study them."

She went on to speak of the loss which that movement had suffered by Gandhi's death.

" Fanatical Indian opinion was glad," she said, " but the lamentations here were unbelievable."

" It seems strange," I ventured, " that his death and Mr. Jinnah's should almost have coincided."

" Yes ; it was a great blow for Pakistan to be deprived so soon of the Quaid-i-Azam ; the masses were behind him. But he did not foresee how quickly events would move ; he always thought partition would take ten years to accomplish. As it was, the personnel for all our work had to be found at once, and could not be trained gradually as he had expected."

I summoned enough courage to put the question that I had already discussed with Mr. Bokhari.

" There's just one more thing . . . Many of Gandhi's followers are concerned about the imprisonment of Abdul Khan Ghaffir Khan."

She looked at me narrowly, but she did not reprove me.

" The conditions of his internment are quite comfortable," she said. " We keep him there because we dare not let him go."

" It's his detention without trial that troubles some of us." Remembering the obvious response about Regulation 18B, I did not press the point, but made a final inquiry. " Is there any hope that Pakistan will release him ? "

" If the Kashmir dispute were settled and Pakistan's frontier became quiet, we might consider it." She added drily : " That's up to India."

For the first time she looked at the clock, and immediately we rose to leave. She had given us an hour and a half of her morning instead of the twenty minutes usually reserved for visitors.

Leaving Michael Scott to convey his thanks for Pakistan's support at Lake Success, I went from the Prime Minister's house to the Gul-e-Ranna Club. At this Centre, also started by Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, refugee women were taught to sew and embroider.



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Although I had come to inspect their work, I was now incapable of showing much interest. During the last part of the long discussion, an indefinable chilly dizziness had gradually taken hold of me. At first I had attributed it to the tension of the exacting interview ; now I realised that some new germ had me in its grip. Recalling with dismay that my homeward ship was due to leave Karachi only two days hence, I wondered what I was in for now.

At the Centre, examining the embroideries, stood Begum Rahimtoola, wife of the High Commissioner in London ; she had accompanied her husband to the Colombo Conference and was now on her way back to England. Greeting her briefly but, I hoped, politely, I hurried to the car and returned to the hotel.

Concluding that I had caught a chill through being perpetually underclad in the unforeseen cool weather, I confided my trouble to Major Hussein. He promised to search Karachi for a bottle of influenza mixture, and with little delay managed to find one.

This medicine was all the lunch I could tackle, but the day's programme had to be fulfilled. At the Radio Station, still feeling as far from reality as an opium eater, I managed to record an innocuous interview which briefly discussed English literature and answered some questions on my own books. When the recording finished, I was given without comment a fee for which I had not asked. Sending it to Begum Liaquat Ali Khan for her Refugee Fund, I credited the radio officials with a good mark for their honest refusal to exploit a foreign visitor.

At tea and an interview with Mr. Fazlur Rahman, Minister for Commerce and Education, Barry had to talk for us both ; I listened as though from a great distance to the Minister describing the problem of building up schools from zero, and then heard the conversation slide as usual on to Iqbal and Islamic theory. But the next engagement, a meeting with the Pakistan P.E.N., could not be left in Barry's hands. I confessed my predicament to Shahid Suhrawardy, who now seemed an old friend ; sympathetically he steered me through a comparison of the English poets produced by the two World Wars to a discussion on Asian poetry in which the audience did most of the talking. In that audience I saw Begum Ikramullah, Professor Ahmed Ali, and Michael Scott ; I wondered if I looked as odd to them as they appeared to me.

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Barry subsequently assured me that I kept a dinner engagement late that evening. Unquestionably I brought back from it the volume of Iqbal's work presented to me by Dr. Bakar ; I also recalled vaguely an odd conversation, inconsequent as a nightmare, with a persistent young woman who had recently completed her Degree course, and on the strength of it fired questions at me about English writers.

" I suppose there is a great admiration for Professor Laski's books in England ? "

" They are certainly read a good deal by students," I replied.

" And the novels of Marie Corelli—they are much read too ? "

" Well, no—not now!" I protested, wondering what Harold Laski, who was then still living, would think of this literary association.

At the hotel Barry said firmly : " Go to bed at once ! I'll get you a hot-water bottle."

" How will you get it filled in the tropics ? " I asked idiotically.

" Somewhere—anywhere ! You go to bed, and I'll see you get one."

By now my sole desire was to obey. Pausing only to take the last dose of the influenza mixture, I staggered into bed. Barry, resourceful as usual in producing unaccustomed objects from unexpected places, brought the hot-water-bottle while I was still just sufficiently awake to take it from him.

The following morning, by one of those miracles which sometimes occur at the dictate of necessity, the strange affliction had vanished. This was fortunate, for we had an interview fixed at ten o'clock with Miss Fatima Jinnah, sister of the Quaid-i-Azam, and she was even more remote from the normal track of visitors than Begum Liaquat Ali Khan. Uncertain whether to thank the hot-water bottle or the week's supply of influenza mixture consumed in a few hours, I found myself standing in her entrance hall feeling quite clear-headed. From an open doorway careered a small, fluffy, friendly dog ; more fortunate than myself, he was wearing a knitted terra-cotta woollen jacket to protect him against the cold wind.

Without delay we were shown into Miss Jinnah's room, and I shook hands with the most beautiful elderly woman I had ever seen. Tall, upright and slender, with fine delicate features, clear olive complexion, and loose wavy hair almost white above sombre

dark eyes, the Quaid-i-Azam's sister resembled a lovely monument to irremediable grief. I felt that I ought to take off my shoes, as in the Hindu temples, for the quiet room adorned by pictures and photographs of Mohammed Ali Jinnah appeared to be less a boudoir than a shrine.

Like India with its portraits and symbols of Mahatma Gandhi, Pakistan was still dominated by the face of Mr. Jinnah, born in the Old Town of Karachi seventy-four years ago. I had first seen that proud, stern countenance on the walls of Karachi Airport ; it had since looked severely at me from every guide-book and official publication that I had opened. His sister, who lived with it perpetually, might have been a recently-bereaved widow in her silent reminiscent devotion.

She had little to say to us ; unlike Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, she did not attempt to enlarge our education. A courtesy had been requested of her and she was prepared to fulfil it with dignity ; that was all. Conversation flagged ; in order to fill a long pause, I remarked how much impressed I had been by the speed and efficiency with which Pakistan had taken shape.

"The Muslim people have always been efficient," said Miss Jinnah, "but they never had an opportunity to show it until they created their own State."

As a contribution to that efficiency, she did not forget when we left to send her greetings to my husband ; Mohammed Ali Jinnah had been alive when G. visited them two years earlier. The small fluffy dog accompanied us to the door and rolled on the gravel outside. He alone, in that dedicated household, appeared to have any stake in the future.

Michael Scott had not been with us ; even he could not arrange to be received by Miss Jinnah at short notice. But he joined us at the house of Mr. Khwaja Shahabuddin, the bearded Minister of the Interior, where a scheduled talk on Pakistan's internal problems turned rapidly into a family party. A small granddaughter, like an animated kitten, was playing on the floor when we entered. Remarking only that if the Kashmir problem were solved all Pakistan's difficulties with India would fall into place, Mr. Shahabuddin discarded politics with apparent relief, and showed us a picture of his seven sons and daughters. Two of the sons and a daughter-in-law came in, and joined the

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amicable discussion. The family atmosphere seemed appropriate, for the day was Sunday, and my last in Pakistan.

We shared Sunday luncheon with another family at Begum Ikramullah's house in Clifton. A kitchen mishap with the mayonnaise delayed the meal till 2 p.m.; while we waited we sat on the green lawn by the seashore, and ate oranges cut in half as an aid to conversation. The Permanent Foreign Secretary left the social conversation to his lively wife and three self-possessed young daughters, but when lunch was over he asked me to accompany him to the flat roof of the house.

Before us spread an immense panorama of blue-grey water and ochre-shaded sand; behind us lay the city with its domes and minarets, and the road to the airport. A scrubby stretch of mud-flats separated the house from the sea; above the beach stood an abandoned church. They had found it there when they took the house, said my host; whether it was Anglican or Catholic he did not know. Various architects, he continued, including Sir Patrick Abercrombie, had drawn up plans for "Greater Karachi"; it was to be a metropolis for two million people, spread over an expanse of two hundred square miles.

"Come back in ten years' time," he added, "and we'll show you a really fine city, with parks and promenades, and avenues of trees."

On our way back to Karachi we called by invitation on the liberal-minded Finance Minister, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad. A luncheon party was just leaving when we arrived, but over coffee on his lawn we discussed the Kashmir conflict. Only, it seemed, when that spectre was laid would the new life of India and Pakistan really begin.

We escaped temporarily from its shadow when Archdeacon Spence invited us all to take part in his Sunday evening service at the Anglican Church in Lawrence Road. The men and women belonging to this small group of Karachi Christians sat on different sides of the aisle. When the hymns and prayers ended, Michael Scott gave them a brief sermon; in his borrowed white cassock, with the spot-light over the pulpit on his face, he typified the popular conception of a saintly young evangelist. Barry and I were asked to follow with short addresses to the congregation from the aisle. As I hoped to hear at eight o'clock what the Pakistan Radio would make of my recorded broadcast,

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I spoke first ; in those surroundings it seemed not too injudicious to mention the one-ness of humanity, and plead for an attempt to understand the outlook of opponents. As I left, I heard Barry in characteristic fashion beginning his talk.

“ I don't know what you people have done to deserve three sermons . . . ”

When I reached the Palace, I found that I could not hear my broadcast after all ; the hotel was undergoing one of its periodic electrical blackouts. We ate dinner hurriedly in semi-darkness, for young Mr. Hussein had asked us to visit the Pakistan Exhibition on the fairground at the north-east corner of the city. There we inspected pictures of locomotives, specimens of jute, charts recording commercial progress, and open booths selling native products.

I endeavoured to take an interest in the development of Pakistan State Railways and the statistics of jute exports, but my thoughts ran on Miss Fatima Jinnah and the Quaid-i-Azam in his tomb behind the Exhibition Ground. Had Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the austere leader who had created a State from the hopes and frustrations of a people, now seen the sunrise of wisdom for which Tagore had prayed ? Had he and Mahatma Gandhi, reunited in a communal heaven, found that place of understanding in which the secrets of all hearts are revealed, and the conflicts of nations take their place in the total perspective of the human story ?

That night I packed to the accompaniment of a final speech from Barry, politely determined to pay tribute to the privilege of our joint travels. Two days later he was leaving by air to pick up his ship for New Zealand at Bombay. In the morning he and our escorts accompanied me to the docks ; I had expected to sail about nine o'clock, but found that a typical delay in the arrival of the customs officials would postpone the hour of departure till noon.

While the two Mr. Husseins went off to a late breakfast Barry and I walked up and down the docks, trying to make a final assessment of our achievements during the brief visit to Pakistan. The chill which followed the dust-storm had gone from the air at last ; in the brilliant warmth of the morning sunshine my ship resembled a beautiful white bird preparing to fly away. We had won, we believed, the confidence of the people whom we

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had met ; if they had ever thought of us as Government agents or well-meaning dupes, they had now dismissed the idea. That might not be much, but in the search for mutual comprehension it was perhaps not worthless.

At eleven o'clock our friends returned, and we went up the gangway to the promenade deck. As the ship still showed no signs of sailing an hour later, the two officials were obliged to return to their work and take Barry with them on the long drive from the docks to the city. Barry looked quite dejected, and I realised that I too should feel lost without him ; no one to argue with all the way home ! Some day, perhaps, I should make a tour of Australia and New Zealand ; at present our chances of meeting again seemed remote. 'Travellers' friendships have always this evanescent quality ; they are unique islands of time, irrecoverable.

We shook hands, optimistically promising to exchange letters. I waved to the car until it rounded the corner of the dock, and then went below to unpack beneath the porthole of my tiny single cabin. When the ship finally sailed in the early afternoon, I returned to the deck to see the last of Karachi.

Barry went back to visit refugee camps and sit through a succession of solitary meals. At breakfast next day, he wrote me later, our waiter who had never realised that we were not husband and wife solicitously commented on my absence.

" Is Madame not coming down this morning ? "

" No," said Barry firmly, and I could hear the pseudo-bitterness of his tone. " She's on her way back to England, and I'm going as fast as I can in the opposite direction ! "

Seen from the deck, the city with its roofs and towers against their hinterland of desert suggested an African rather than an Indian town. Its long flat expanse, cream-coloured and light brown above the sandy shore, was broken only by the domes of hotels and mosques within the encircling range of rust-coloured hills. Above their deep violet shadows spread the pale cobalt sky, delicately flecked with feathery clouds.

No green was visible in the vast brown distance as the ship moved out of the harbour ; only a few dockside bushes struggled from the sand between new terra-cotta buildings going up by the score. The port ended at Manora Point, a rocky bluff covered with scrub ; from its summit a red and white lighthouse kept

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guard over the smooth blue-grey water. On the starboard side of the ship three rocks, big, little and tiny, seemed to be offering a final salute.

Gradually the low line of the city merged into the horizon behind the silver-painted oil-tanks glistening from the docks. The smoke from the steamers in the harbour curled lazily up towards the bright afternoon sun. At last only the sea was left within the vanishing circle of barren hills.

## XIX—EAST TO WEST

“ What is a good life ? Can you imagine any good life which does not have an artistic and an aesthetic element in it, and a moral element in it ? ”

Jawaharlal Nehru.

Valedictory Address on Sarojini Naidu,  
3rd March, 1949.

WHEN THE SHIP reached the open sea on its way to Bombay, I stretched myself along a lounge chair on the sunny deck and revelled in the luxury of peaceful solitude. Nine weeks lay behind me of perpetual travel, public engagements, fresh contacts, incessant conversation. Underlying them like an elusive thread, constantly lost yet always recovered, had been the search for new wisdom and signs of new hope—for Asia, for Europe, for a war-wrecked world still sick with conflict.

Now, released at last from the stimulating but exacting society of tense people discussing controversial topics, I had two days before the majority of home-going passengers joined the ship at Bombay in which to draw a few clear impressions from the still unsorted jumble of ideas, experiences, and personalities. The attempt would not be made only for my own satisfaction ; Manilal Gandhi had asked me to write an article on India and the Conference for his paper, *Indian Opinion*.

Lying back in the deck chair, I surveyed my fellow-passengers. Those of whom I should see most—the returning Brigadier, the escaping Indian princess, the Principal of a Calcutta college changing his job for a post in the West Indies—were to sit with me at the Captain's table after we left Bombay. Meanwhile I had no obligations to anyone ; I could sit where I liked, and converse or not as I pleased. Now I should have time to read the new collection of Tagore's poems, edited by Krishna Kripalani with the help of Amiya Chakravarty and others, which Amiya had given me at Santiniketan.

The contingent of passengers who had joined the ship at Karachi looked agreeable enough, but it seemed probable that there would be none of the controversies on religion, literature



and politics with which Barry had enlivened my travels. Politics indeed, both then and later, appeared a subject best avoided, for most of these voyagers were civilian officials and Army officers returning to England with their families, and hoping that the Labour Government would be defeated in the imminent election. So audibly expressed were these hopes in conversations overheard on deck, and so confident were those who expressed them that the whole ship-load shared their opinions, that I was obliged to move out of earshot lest in spite of myself I should be drawn into unprofitable controversy.

Were they hoping, poor dreamers, that a Conservative Government would give them back their pre-revolution India and their jobs ? This, I knew, could not happen ; history is often re-written, but never reversed.

The travelling families, taken individually, were small, but their younger members eventually added up to a formidable collection of juveniles. No less than seventy-five children, mostly under ten, were on their way to England ; they swarmed over decks and passages, making a quiet spot in which to read or meditate become a more difficult quest with each day's journey. At last I was to discover a corner on an upper deck between two life-boats, but even here I should be perpetually entertained by a shrill chorus from the ship's nursery.

During these first forty-eight hours, I had the sunlit stretch of deck almost to myself. Taking a pencil from my handbag, I began to make a few notes for Manilal Gandhi's article. What were my impressions of India ? he had asked me, as though anything worth saying on a topic so immense could be netted in 1,500 words and reduced to a column and a half.

How overwhelming I had found this hitherto unknown country, with its violent contrasts of climate, colours, political opinions, racial differences, religious outlooks, and historical developments ! What assessment could there be which would include both that spectacular wealth and that abject poverty, or compare the highest levels of culture with the lowest depths of illiteracy ? No wonder Gandhi had developed a creed of non-violence in order to mitigate the harsh conflicts within his country. India could hardly eliminate internal strife until these gulfs were bridged. The chief fault, it seemed, of the departed British rulers had been their failure to begin the process of

bridge-building in many places where it might have been started.

For some of us who had come to India from the West, her greatest gift appeared to be the changed perspective that she had given us. When Premier Nehru, in closing the Sevagram Conference, reminded his audience that the inhabitants of Europe's battlegrounds were better off than the peoples of physically undamaged India, he had emphasised an aspect of his country which could not fail to impress any traveller who came to it with open eyes. Each of us could now say, as his biographers had said of C. F. Andrews, "once and for all the European perspective was left behind." We had achieved a reorientation of vision which henceforth would enable us to look through a series of new windows upon the needs and problems of the human race.

Surely it was in the light of Asia's primary needs that the threat of Communism to peace, which the West saw as a head-on clash between the Soviet Union and the United States, must be newly understood? In this light, too, the Indo-Pakistan conflict appeared as the potential source of a world-wide upheaval. If that cold and bitter dispute suddenly became a shooting contest, the only country liable to benefit was Russia. While official delegates ostentatiously walked out at United Nations Conferences, the seeds of war flourished grimly amid the poverty, starvation, insecurity and fear of a still half-forgotten continent.

At this moment tea arrived on deck; with it came the Brigadier, who had joined the ship at Karachi. He wanted, he said after a few moments' conversation, to tell me a story about Pakistan where he had spent some time with a military unit.

"After one bout of economic reprisals," he continued, "there was a good deal of smuggling across the frontier. In our area it was chiefly cloth sent by India into Pakistan, in return for wheat sent by Pakistan into India. The long lines of camels kept going to and fro, and one day the provincial authority appealed to the Army to stop the traffic because the police wouldn't do it."

The Brigadier had promised to do his best, and soon his men managed to capture a convoy of cloth-carrying Indian camels. "But when I reported this feat," he said, "the local officials were horrified. They didn't want to stop the cloth coming in, only the wheat going out!"

"How did they propose to pay for the cloth without any basis of exchange?" I inquired.

The Brigadier shrugged his shoulders.

"Nowadays," he said, "nations seem to run their affairs by sentiment, and not by logic."

Our Conference had been held to find some alternative to that kind of "sentiment," I reflected when he and the tea had gone. The alternative proposed by Gandhi, whose memory had brought us together, had been his philosophy of non-violence. Through the inspiration of that philosophy he had raised an ancient but backward nation from the dust of humiliation to the heights of freedom, and bequeathed new standards of political conduct to all mankind. It had been a unique experience in mutual encouragement to find men and women from totally different countries, cultures and backgrounds seeking a panacea for the ills of mankind in Gandhi's terms. I could sometimes only have wished that these terms, as his followers interpreted them, had included a more comprehensive picture of India.

Though they belonged to a people which created so much loveliness in the form of carvings, embroideries, and rich materials, most Indians had still to acquire a sense of beauty in living. Sometimes the negative virtue of renunciation which Gandhi and his friends turned into a creed had appeared merely to represent a lack of simple aesthetic standards. "Alas," Tagore had lamented :

" my cheerless country,  
Donning the worn-out garment of decrepitude,  
Loaded with the burden of wisdom,  
You imagine you have seen through the fraud of creation."

I could not quite follow the reasoning which impelled some of Gandhi's Western disciples to "identify" themselves with India by means of shoddy attire, homes stripped of the most modest adornments, and meals eaten in Indian fashion but without Indian skill. They underrated, I felt, the part which beauty plays in the catharsis of the human spirit. They remained earth-bound "social workers," suspicious of beauty's exhilaration, subordinating its claims to the safe and dreary gospel of common sense.

This ruthless asceticism was the only part of Gandhi's prophetic and revolutionary teaching that I had found unacceptable. My reluctance seemed to be reinforced by the similar judgments of

Tagore. Creative art, as those who tried to produce it knew, involved an inexorable obedience to the artist's vision ; beauty, at least as much as the control of the senses, was the product of discipline. After religion, if indeed the two were separable, it represented the highest source of inspiration, and, even for the most austere of human beings, the supreme expression of the divine in nature and man. " In the trinity of Truth, Beauty and Goodness," Dr. L. P. Jacks had written in words which explained for me the lack that I had felt in some of the Conference programmes, " Beauty plays the part of the vitalising element, the other two becoming skeletons when there is no beauty to clothe them in flesh and breathe upon them with the breath of Life." Why then did beauty in its many manifestations seem to Gandhi and his followers a form of self-indulgence, a falling from grace ? No doubt they would have replied that such manifestations were only for the civilised ; that decorative refinements could not be brought into daily living until hygiene and sanitation had been given to millions. But how much did the painters of the murals in the Ajanta caves know about hygiene ? What acquaintance had the medieval troubadours with sanitation ? Beauty and cleanliness, imagination and orderly living, were surely not incompatible just because the one sometimes existed without the other. By the complete human being, they were jointly attainable.

" And shall not loveliness be loved for ever ? " wrote the Greek poet Euripides, obviously regarding his question as rhetorical. Would Gandhi and his friends have answered " No " ? And what was their response to the rebuke of their own *Gita* ?

" The abstinent run away from what they desire  
But carry their desires with them :  
When a man enters Reality,  
He leaves his desires behind him."

Putting the notebook and pencil away, I walked to the rail of the ship and looked at the calm, empty ocean, where a shimmering pathway turned swiftly from gold to red in the wake of the setting sun. No ship or aeroplane interrupted the blue vastness of the Arabian Sea, lovely with the loveliness which Euripides and Tagore had worshipped.

Their underestimate of beauty was not, I thought, the only failure of Gandhi's sacrificial and devoted followers. In Delhi I

had felt that they over-compensated by social work for their lack of political initiative ; there was a point at which cottage industries and rural reconstruction resembled the sand into which the ostrich puts its head. Before social endeavour could bear fruit in India or Pakistan, it required the official allocation of enormous sums ; money on an almost unlimited scale was needed for schools, village teachers, hospitals, and for the great irrigation schemes which would bring food and work, and banish poverty. But such money would never be forthcoming while India and Pakistan spent 60 and 70 per cent of their Central Revenues on defence measures against each other.

My visit to Pakistan had strengthened my belief that Gandhi's disciples, while continuing his social and educational programme, should be seeking a solution of the Indo-Pakistan dispute. They ought to be studying potential measures of reconciliation, and confronting the intransigence, wherever it existed, of their own Government as well as Pakistan's. The time-factor made all the more urgent the development of their ability to see their political leaders in perspective.

Because of Gandhi's teaching, India remained the one great country in which reconciliation and non-violence were regarded in high places as conceivable policies, and not the mere fantastic visions of a lunatic fringe. One could not imagine President Truman or Mr. Attlee devoting valuable time, as Mr. Nehru, Dr. Prasad, and Rajkamuri Amrit Kaur had devoted it, to a body of international visitors whose object had been to discuss the relationship of non-violence to world problems. Could the Mahatma's standards laid down for India be rescued and upheld by his disciples before war with Pakistan extinguished all hope of their application ?

I went on thinking of the Indo-Pakistan conflict when I returned to my chair next morning, and looked down on the white wake of the ship washed yellow by the morning sun. So long as each party to the dispute followed the contemporary practice of calling the other the aggressor, the search for a new sunrise of wisdom could hardly be expected to make much progress.

After I reached home, that conflict was to deepen into new tensions. When riots and massacres smote East and West

### *Search After Sunrise*

Bengal, a few concerned individuals in London considered what they might do, amid the vast indifference of the West, to mitigate communal violence. One initiative at least was possible; they could call on the help of a higher power which functioned when earthly resources failed.

An approach to several religious leaders brought only one response. But it was enough, for it came from the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, where seven years earlier a group of Gandhi's friends had prayed for reconciliation between India and Britain. On 22nd March, 1950, a similar gathering assembled for a new intercession which they had jointly composed.

"We are met to-day in this time of perplexity that by prayer we may cooperate with God in the working out of his great purposes of good for the peoples of India and Pakistan. . . .

"Let us first of all acknowledge with shame all that has been evil in our history, and all that even now makes us unworthy to be called a Christian nation :

"Our responsibility for much that has been wrong in the past history of India, our errors, and the difficulties which we left behind in our withdrawal :

"Our readiness, alongside the readiness of others, to seek, in the last resort, a settlement of disputes by violence :

"Our own failure to spread goodwill and be ready for reconciliation and forgiveness in our own relationships. . . .

"Let us pray for the peace and welfare of India and Pakistan.

"That the leaders in each country may be so guided with grace and wisdom in all their words and actions that the spirit of suspicion and fear may be done away and the new spirit of love and brotherhood grow up.

"That all who speak or write may be ready to examine their own shortcomings before accusing their neighbours.

"That God may show mercy and stir up compassion for all those inhabitants of both countries who have fled from their homes and are now refugees.

"That the normal processes of trade and economic interchange may be speedily restored.

"That there may be a better and more constructive use of all their resources, diverting expenditure from what divides and destroys to what unites and saves . . . ."

An act of praise and thanksgiving followed the prayers :

## *East to West*

“For the life and example of Mahatma Gandhi ; that the same spirit which inspired him may inspire the hearts of his friends now responsible for the government of India.

“For all who loyally follow Truth as it has been given each to see it, that our religious convictions may unite and not divide us.

“For the granting of freedom to India and Pakistan : that they may be guided and strengthened to use such freedom for their mutual good and the benefit of the whole world . . . ”

The small group of friends who met that day did not regard prayer as a demand for goods and services ; they thought of it as a dedication of the mind and spirit in an act of faith. Not one would dare to claim that their action had direct consequences, but it did have a remarkable sequel.

After the service, the printed sheets of hymns and prayers were distributed all over the world by those who attended. Amid the troubles of East and West Bengal, Agatha Harrison used her copies where they could be most effective. Another sent from London reached Mr. Frank Coan at the Karachi Y.M.C.A. in time for the prayers to be incorporated in his own service of intercession, for which Premier Liaquat Ali Khan had asked before leaving to meet Mr. Nehru in Delhi. Among the recipients had been Barry in New Zealand ; weeks afterwards I received a small magazine containing an article in which he had commented on the events that followed.

“It is often hard to believe, in the present state of the world,” he wrote, “that ‘more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.’ Perhaps our praying is not at a deep enough level, or not persistent enough nor expectant enough. Of course we cannot expect prayer to have positive effects unless (a) we are ourselves doing what we can to achieve the desired end, and (b) we are trying to put ourselves into line with God’s own plan and purposes and our prayers are in keeping with them . . . It is with some hesitation, therefore, that I relate an instance in which special prayers that at least appeared to fulfil the conditions were followed by important political events in the direction deeply desired by the people praying. I make no claims. I merely state that people gathered for urgent prayer and that twelve days later there were unexpected happenings in another part of the world . . .

“We found India and Pakistan at unlovely loggerheads, with tension mounting and a warlike situation developing : from a

### *Search After Sunrise*

long way apart leaders and, especially, newspapers engaged in a slanging match and exchange of threats. There seemed to be no common meeting ground and little chance of reconciliation. The intercession service was held in England on 22nd March. On 5th April our newspapers reported that there were hopes of a peaceful settlement following cordial talks between the two Prime Ministers—Pandit Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan—which began in Delhi on 3rd April. Agreement was reached guaranteeing the rights of minorities in the two countries and providing safeguards which it was hoped would prevent further outbreaks of communal panic and violence. After the seven-day talks and the agreement (which does not cover all matters in dispute), Pandit Nehru told his parliament : ‘ We have stopped ourselves at the edge of a precipice and turned our backs to it. That by itself is a definite gain . . . The matter is not merely political or economic but essentially a human problem in which human lives and human suffering are involved . . . ’

“ The British press was unanimous in welcoming the agreement and commending the courage of the two leaders in facing nations which had been fanatically roused to fear and hatred.”

Thanks to the moral legacy of Gandhi, two Prime Ministers had withdrawn their peoples from the brink of mutual attack. The settlement, it was true, “ did not cover all matters in dispute ” ; the problem remained which we had repeatedly been told was the key to the whole conflict. Twelve months later, a plan acceptable to both countries had yet to be devised for the future of Kashmir, though the Delhi agreement over Bengal had been followed by a Trade Pact which further alleviated Indo-Pakistan tension, and gave new hope that a road to full reconciliation would ultimately be found.

War between two Members of the Commonwealth had been averted, but the purpose for which Gandhi sacrificed his life still awaited fulfilment. Only the future would show how far the two peoples whom he had died to unite would rise to the spiritual level of that act of atonement.

On 25th January I awoke early, to see the sun rising over Bombay harbour. Beneath the red dawn, a white sheen spread across the smooth water ; the sky brightened above the treacherous hills surrounding the city. I wished that the date



were one day later ; thanks to the anxiety of the port authorities to speed my ship on its way, I should miss the celebration of the Indian Republic on the 26th. The brilliant disk of the sun, already climbing, leapt over the serrated outline of a low dark ridge.

At Bombay a cable awaited me from my son and daughter : " Happy voyage and much love." When I had cleared the Customs, the Wadias came on board anxious for news of Pakistan ; with them was Mr. Collins of Macmillan, bringing me a copy of D. F. Karaka's biography of Gandhi, *Out of Dust*. Over glasses of orange juice we talked in the lounge, interrupted only by a young journalist who appeared with a photographer to interview me for his paper, *March*.

" What line do you think the new India ought to take ? " he inquired, after a series of equally comprehensive questions.

That, I replied, was surely a matter for India herself. But if he wished, I would leave with him three suggestions which Indians might care to consider.

" Get the Kashmir issue settled, and speed up U.N.O.'s attempts to settle it. Make India a real democracy, with freedom of speech, opinion and assembly, and no imprisonment without trial. Above all, continue to follow the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. They may not be immediately capable of realisation, but don't throw them overboard as ' unattainable.' Let India try to keep the lead to the rest of the world which he gave her, and avoid imitating the power-politics which have twice brought disaster to Europe."

The ship's loud-speaker blared out its warning.

" Ashore, please, ashore ! Visitors off the ship ! "

My friends took their leave ; half an hour after noon we sailed. With the help of a tug called " Cheerful," the ship made for the open sea as its home-going passengers waved to the crowd on the quay. From behind the docks appeared the skyline of Bombay, its domes and minarets a dark grey-brown quite different from the African ochre-colour of Karachi.

All over India, preparations were going on to acclaim the Republic which was to remain a member of the Commonwealth in spite of all that had passed. Moving a Resolution to that effect in the Constituent Assembly on 16th May, 1949, Jawaharlal Nehru had related how, when he first joined the Commonwealth Conference in London, the ghosts of his yesterdays sat beside

him, urging him not to trip or to forget them. They were still with him when he put the motion for the ratification of the Commonwealth decision before the Assembly :

“ Resolved that this Assembly do hereby ratify the declaration, agreed to by the Prime Minister of India, on the continued membership of India in the Commonwealth of Nations, as set out in the official statement issued at the conclusion of the Conference of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London on 27th April, 1949.”

Whether the British who once imprisoned him liked it or not, Nehru stood close to the centre of international politics. Until I had met him again, heard him, and read his speeches, I had not realised how far he was followed not only by India but by Asia—a newly-born, resurgent Asia which contained nearly half the human race. Would the Western democracies realise in time her size, her vigour, her growing power of initiative ?

Nehru's India in alliance with Mao's China could form a *bloc* strong enough to safeguard the peace of the world. Anti-Communist though India might be, and menacing as China was soon to become, such an alliance was not impossible. Had not Dr. Beanson Tseng, the Chinese Christian Professor at our Conference, emphasised the unique character which Chinese Communism would probably assume ?

“ Communism in China, with its doctrine of the Golden Mean, will not be like Communism elsewhere,” he had said. “ It will be Communism, not China, that will ultimately change.”

Nehru, Mao, and Stalin would have the human majority on their side. So far such a Triple Alliance seemed unlikely ; though Nehru was working for friendship with Soviet Russia as with other powers, he remained not only a democrat, but a democrat who knew, and stated, what democracy meant.

Too often the leaders of British and American democracy had handed over democratic theory to be interpreted for their public by minor paid propagandists. Nehru had made no such mistake. In his public utterances he had defined, though he had not invariably followed, the democratic ideals and practices to which in his moments of vision he knew that India must subscribe. He defined them not once but repeatedly, so that no one literate enough to read the newspapers could fail to understand what they meant.

## *East to West*

Among both the Communist and Hindu extremists those ideals had opponents throughout India, but the Prime Minister went on defining them. In every address he gave, he spoke to Asia through India ; and all Asia listened. In Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, his words were accepted, and though Britain and America were to reject his offer of mediation in Korea, there was little doubt that the Koreans, when they were permitted to know of it, would weigh it against the suffering which it might have saved them. Without having adopted Gandhi's programme and with no claim to the halo of the saint, Nehru had acquired much of Gandhi's authority. To-day Nehru was India, and India might well be the key to the coming years.

In Bombay harbour lay vessels of the many nations which looked, sceptically, hopefully or despairingly according to their history and temperament, towards India for a pointer to that unknown future. Grey-painted warships, merchant vessels, tugs and fishing boats, were drawn up beneath the succession of cranes along the great docks. Dozens of white sea-birds dipped into the soup-green water, which changed to steel-grey as the ship passed the pseudo-Saracenic silhouette of the India Gate. That slate-coloured symbol of British domination, with the domed mass of the Taj Mahal Hotel behind it, seemed now to strike an irrelevant note.

Far out to sea a land mass—or was it an island ?—of higher hills appeared, so dim as to be almost a shadow. The noon sunshine intensified the pale tawny shades of the rocks outlining the crescent-shaped bay. From the city a factory siren sounded like an air-raid warning ; the sea-birds, startled out of the water, flew screaming behind the wake of the ship.

A large white-painted liner moved slowly towards the Ballard Pier as we passed Malabar Hill, with its guardian lighthouse and coronet of trees. When the ship reached the open sea, the colour of the buildings in the distant city turned from grey to brown, and the roofs and domes looked golden in the afternoon light.

Already the flag-poles were being erected on those buildings, and the green, white and orange flags made ready to fly from their summits. To-morrow Bombay would celebrate the birth of the Indian Republic.

*W. & J. Mackay & Co., Ltd., Chatham*

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